

Council



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12th May 2026

The **Annual General Meeting** of the **Council** of North Norfolk District Council will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices on **Wednesday, 20 May 2026 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 live-streamed: [NNDC eDemocracy - YouTube](#)

Emma Denny
Democratic Services & Governance 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 C Rouse, Cllr L Shires, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr E Tooke, Cllr J Toye, Cllr K Toye, Cllr A Varley, Cllr L Vickers and Cllr L Withington

Members of the Management Team, appropriate Officers, Press and Public



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

A G E N D A

1. OUTGOING CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive announcements from the outgoing Chair, included the presentation of cheques to nominated charities.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

To elect a Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

3. INCOMING CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

To receive the incoming Chair's communications.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

To elect a Vice-Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

5. VOTE OF THANKS TO THE RETIRING CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies for absence, if any.

7. MINUTES

1 - 14

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 25 March 2026.

8. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

15 - 20

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)

9. 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.

10. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive announcements from the Leader, if any.

11. UPDATE BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

To receive a verbal update from the Chief Executive, if anything to report.

12. REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND

21 - 32

PANELS.

Executive Summary	<p>A recent central government consultation entitled "Planning committee reform: statutory consultation on draft Regulations and guidance, included draft regulations setting a limit on the size of committees responsible for determining planning applications (Development Committee). The current committee has 14 members and the maximum size set out in the new regulations is 13 members.</p> <p>A report was taken to Development Committee on 30th April (Appendix A) seeking a steer from committee members on the preferred size and members agreed to recommend a committee of 13 members.</p> <p>Following a change to the size of a committee, the Council is required to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub committees and working parties to ensure that they reflect the political balance of the Council, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made thereunder.</p>
Options considered	<p>This is a statutory report and Full Council is required to approve any change to the political balance and the allocation of seats on committees. Alternative options are therefore not presented.</p>
Consultation(s)	<p>Members of Development Committee have recommended a reduction in the size of the Committee by one member. It is therefore necessary to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels.</p>
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That Council approves the change to the size of Development Committee from 14 members to 13.2. That Council approves the allocation of seats to political groups as shown at Appendix B, taking into consideration any arrangements agreed by the Group Leaders3. That delegation is given to the Group Leaders to make any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties & panels.

Wards affected	All
Contact Officer	Emma Denny, Democratic Services & Governance Manager, emma.denny@north-norfolk.gov.uk ,

13. REPORT ON APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO CABINET

The Leader will inform Council of any changes to appointments to Cabinet.

14. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTES TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND PANELS

AGENDA NOTE:

If the Council is to approve alternative arrangements for appointments to a committee other than those required by law on political balance, it must be without any member voting against them.

Members are reminded of the requirement for committee members and substitutes on Development Committee and the Licensing Committees to have undertaken the necessary training. The same requirement applies to the Employment & Appeals Committee.

Cabinet members and the Chairman of Governance, Risk & Audit Committee cannot sit or substitute on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

That Council appoints members and substitutes to committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels for 2026/2027, in line with the allocation of seats as set out at agenda item 11.

Please note that the list of proposed appointments will be circulated prior to the meeting.

15. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS TO COMMITTEES

AGENDA NOTE:

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be drawn from the main opposition group and the Vice-Chair from the ruling group, as set out in the Council's Constitution (Chapter 4)

Recommendations:

- 1. To appoint Chairs and Vice-Chairs to Committees for 2026/2027**
- 2. To note the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Executive sub-committees and working parties for 2026/2027.**

Please note that Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Executive sub-

committees and working parties are not Council appointments and are therefore provided for noting only.

The list of nominations will be circulated prior to the meeting.

16. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Recommendation:

1. To **approve** Council appointments to Outside Bodies and Joint Committees (Appendix A – to follow)
2. To **approve** the Overview & Scrutiny Committee’s appointment to the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Appendix B)
3. To **note** Executive appointments to Outside Bodies and Joint Committees (Appendix C – to follow)

Please note that some appointments to Outside Bodies are made by the Executive (Cabinet) not Full Council and are therefore provided for noting only. The final list will be circulated prior to the meeting.

17. COUNCILLOR ACCESS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS)

33 - 36

<p>Executive Summary</p>	<p>In October 2025, the Government launched a consultation on proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), including restoring access for councillors and extending access to certain elected mayors in England.</p> <p>The objectives included supporting recruitment and retention in local government, promoting diversity, and achieving consistency with arrangements in devolved administrations.</p> <p>The Local Government Pension Scheme (Elected Member Pensions) Regulations 2026 amended the LGPS Regulations to reinstate access for councillors in England and came into force in April 2026. Under these revised arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - councillors are eligible to join the LGPS in respect of their elected role; - pensionable pay is based on eligible allowances (not expenses); and - elected membership is treated distinctly from any LGPS membership arising from any other local government employment.
<p>Options considered</p>	<p>No alternative options are proposed.</p>

Consultation(s)	This report reflects a change in national legislation following a government consultation undertaken in 2025.
Recommendations	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the recent legislative changes restoring access to the LGPS for councillors in England on an opt-in basis from Monday 11 May 2026, 2. Amend the Members Allowances Scheme to reflect the change.
Reasons for recommendations	To ensure the Members Allowances Scheme reflects this legislative change.

18. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE - RESOURCE REVIEW

37 - 50

Executive Summary	<p>This report sets out resourcing options for the Development Management Service to ensure it can deliver timely planning decisions in the wider public interest following adoption of the Councils Local Plan on 17 December 2025 and the current/expected increase in planning application submissions.</p> <p>With increased planning fee income, now is the right time to review resourcing options to ensure a clearer division of labour and increased resource capacity to help maximise the value of skills and experience already in the team and drive forward improved planning outcomes and timeliness of decision making.</p>
Options considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option One – Do Nothing (Not Recommended) • Option Two – Re-Assign Staffing Across the Wider Planning Service (Not Recommended) • Option Three – Managed Growth (Recommended) which includes the creation of four new posts
Consultation(s)	Consultations have been undertaken with the HR Advisor for Planning, Group Accountant, S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVE “Option Three – Managed Growth” as set out in the report across paragraphs 3.14 to 3.30 to deliver a re-structured DM Service as set out at Appendix A Figure 2 • Authorise immediate recruitment to the four new posts.

Reasons for recommendations	To ensure the Development Management Service is appropriately resourced reflecting increased application workload following adoption of the Council's Local Plan
Background papers	N/A

Wards affected	N/A
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Andrew Brown (Planning Portfolio Holder)
Contact Officer	Geoff Lyon, Development Manager geoff.lyon@north-norfolk.gov.uk

19. **PLANNING POLICY RESOURCES: LOCAL PLAN REVIEW & SENIOR LANDSCAPE (ECOLOGY) OFFICER** 51 - 62

Executive Summary	<p>In line with the immediate Local Plan Review project proposal agreed by Cabinet on 9 March 2026, in order to meet the 30 month review timeline as detailed by the government, a review of resources identifies that a further two professional Planning Policy Officers will be required to take the project forward. This report also seeks the reinstatement of the Planning Policy Manager role, with the Team Leader role being deleted from the establishment. These will be supported by recently announced MHCLG New System Plan Funding.</p> <p>In addition, with additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain, the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post requires additional hours which will be funded by a new Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fee, now being collected from developers.</p>
Options considered	<p>Option 1 Do Nothing (Not Recommended) Option 2 Re-Assign Staff Across the Wider Planning Service (Not Recommended) Option 3 – Managed Growth through the creation of two new planning policy officer posts (1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer and 1 x Planning Policy Officer), replacing the Team Leader role with a Planning Policy Manager post and strengthening the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) position (Recommended).</p>

Consultation(s)	Corporate Leadership Team including the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, HR Advisor for Planning and Group Accountant.
Recommendations	In order to deliver the Local Plan Review within the 30-month timeframe, to approve Option Three and progress the immediate appointment of: 1 x Planning Policy Manager (removing the Team Leader role from the establishment), 1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer & 1 x Planning Policy Officer as detailed in the report. Also, approve the additional hours for the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post.
Reasons for recommendations	To ensure the Planning Policy team is appropriately resourced in order to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan, to comply with statutory requirements and to maintain appropriate planning policy guidance for the district. Also, to meet the additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain.
Background papers	Local Plan Review – Cabinet paper 9 March 2026. Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) project proposal 28 April 2026.

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Andrew Brown
Contact Officer	Iain Withington, Planning Policy Manager iain.withington@north-norfolk.gov.uk David Glason, Assistant Director for Planning david.glason@north-norfolk.gov.uk

20. 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.”

21. PRIVATE BUSINESS

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 25 March 2026 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 6.00 pm

Members Present:

Cllr T Adams	Cllr P Bailey
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 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 C Rouse
Cllr L Shires	Cllr M Taylor
Cllr J Toye	Cllr K Toye
Cllr L Vickers	Cllr L Withington

Also in attendance: The Chief Executive, the S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Director for Service Delivery, the HR Manager and the Democratic Services and Governance Manager.

116 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs M Batey, C Heinink, N Housden, G Mancini-Boyle and A Varley.

117 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th February were approved as a correct record.

118 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

119 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

120 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair spoke about recent civic events that he and the Vice-Chair had attended:

27th February – South Norfolk District Council's Civic Reception

1st March – the Justice Service at King's Lynn Minster

6th March – Broadland District Council's Civic Reception

15th March – national Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Norwich Theatre Royal

121 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader began by saying that he welcomed the Government's 'minded to' decision to opt for a three unitary model for Norfolk. It provided clarity after a period of uncertainty. He believed that this model gave the best chance of securing visible and accessible local government. There were distinct economies, geographies and discretionary services across Norfolk and this provided the best opportunity to act on local needs. He acknowledged that the level of cooperation between authorities during the next phase, depended on the outcome of local elections in May. Work would continue in the meantime.

He said that he was very grateful to officers, the public, parish councils and businesses who had all contributed to developing the proposal submitted to central Government. There was still significant amount of work to do and attention would now be turned to that.

122 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

None.

123 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES & OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no changes to appointments to Committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels.

124 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chair invited Members to ask questions:

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett asked Cllr H Blathwayt, Portfolio Holder for Coast why the Coastal Forum was no longer included in the calendar of meetings. Cllr H Blathwayt, Portfolio Holder for Coast, agreed with her concerns.

Cllr L Vickers asked the Leader, Cllr T Adams for an update on 9 Norwich Street, Fakenham. She said that she had campaigned tirelessly to get a resolution to the situation regarding this property and the local community had backed her and presented a petition to Full Council some months ago. At the last meeting, Cllr Punchard had asked for a confidential meeting with local members to discuss concerns but the Leader had refused. The MP, Mr J Mayhew had also not received a response. She said that she was concerned that no progress was being made and she sought assurance that the constant rebuttals and citing of confidentiality were not a smoke-screen for 'kicking the can down the road'. She asked when the Leader would be in a position to share information with democratically elected members for Fakenham. Cllr Adams said that he had previously met with Jerome Mayhew MP to discuss this matter but as reported at the last meeting of Full Council he was not in a position to share confidential legal information and that remained the case. When there was an announcement, he would share that information but he did not want to jeopardise the process. Cllr Vickers asked when this might happen. Cllr Adams replied that he could not reply at this time.

Cllr V Holliday asked Cllr J Boyle, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Benefits, about preparations made by the Council following a possible increase in homeless

households following the introduction of the Renter's Rights Act. Cllr Boyle replied that there had not been a surge so far but the situation would continue to be monitored.

Cllr K Bayes asked Cllr L Withington about the Town of Culture funding and which towns other than Sheringham and Cromer had been engaged with and what support the Council was offering to assist towns with preparing these applications. Cllr L Withington said there had been considerable interest from North Norfolk and so far Wells, north Walsham and Sheringham and Cromer (combined) had submitted applications. NNDC was the accountable body within the programme, with a deadline of the end of February to agree what this involved. Delivering the programmes was the responsibility of the Partnership scheme of the towns concerned.

Cllr T FitzPatrick asked Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement about the number of enforcement cases. He referred to a case regarding abandoned caravans at Hempton, which neighboured his ward and asked how the Council's issuing of enforcement notices and achieving results compared with other local authorities. Cllr Brown replied that he was not familiar with the case referred to and was not sure how NNDC compared to other authorities. He said that he would provide a written response.

Cllr C Cushing asked Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement, about the Fakenham urban extension which was a key element of the new Local Plan and a key factor in contributing to housing growth in the district. Phase 1 was for 950 houses but there had been no information at all regarding applications for the site and he asked when they might be forthcoming. Cllr Brown replied that he did not have any information as to when applications may be forthcoming. He said that there had been a discussion as to whether the site should progress in sections rather than the whole site. Regarding the number of homes to be built annually, Cllr Brown said that NNDC was subject to transitional arrangements for the Local Plan and this meant that the Council could 557 dwellings over the period of the Plan. However, a new Local Plan needed to be commenced almost immediately so this figure was likely to change again. He said that he would respond in writing regarding the site at Fakenham.

Cllr S Butikofer asked Cllr C Ringer, Portfolio Holder for IT, Environment & Waste, about the 'Duty of Care' initiative regarding trade waste that had been carried out in March and she wondered how well this had gone. Cllr Ringer replied that he had received an update and that it had been carried out in conjunction with colleagues from the Norfolk Waste Partnership. It had focused on reminding businesses that had a duty of care regarding the collection of trade waste. A few businesses were not currently complying and had been advised on their responsibilities.

Cllr N Dixon asked Cllr J Toye, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, about the informal discussion that had followed the question he had asked at the previous meeting and asked that a written answer would be provided to all members. Cllr Toye agreed. He went on to say that it was challenging to get to the granular detail for North Norfolk and even the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce was struggling to access this information. Cllr Dixon followed up by asking what evidence there was to support views regarding hospitality sector and youth unemployment and he would like the response to focus on these points.

The Leader, Cllr Adams, introduced this item. He began by saying that most elements of policy development had been removed from action plans given the development of local government reorganisation (LGR) with the exception of anything that had real benefit and longevity. The Workforce Development & People Strategy fell into this category. It was important to continue to support and develop staff up to the inception of the new unitary authority. NNDC sought to maintain recruitment and retention levels. He thanked staff for their input in developing the strategy, adding that it had been discussed by the Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC).

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

RESOLVED

To approve and adopt the Workforce Development and People Strategy, Learning and Development Strategy and Role Model Manager Framework.

126 MARKETS AND SEAFRONT SERVICE- REQUEST TO INCREASE HEADCOUNT.

Cllr L Withington, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, introduced this item. She explained that, as part of the Council's Leisure and Localities function, the Markets and Seafront Inspector currently undertook a dual-purpose role supporting both market operations and seafront management. This post was currently vacant, and a review of the service had identified that dividing the responsibilities into two distinct roles would provide significant benefits, particularly in relation to recruitment and the overall effectiveness of each function. This action would result in an increase in headcount for the organisation but will not increase the overall budget for the service.

Cllr C Cushing asked why this report was coming straight to Full Council. He said that two new posts were being created with no supporting information provided and no explanation of the financial benefits. He said that markets should be the responsibility of town councils. Fakenham market was managed by the town council and it was paid for via the precept, whereas the markets in this report were paid for by NNDC council tax. He concluded by saying that a new unitary authority would be unlikely to want to pay to manage these markets going forward and that an agreement with the relevant town councils should be reached.

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, referred Cllr Cushing to section 3.2 of the report which stated there was no increase to budget and that it was a full-time role being split into two part time roles. The S151 Officer explained that there was no additional financial strain on the Council and that as the summer months approached, it was deemed to be more practical to recruit two part time roles.

Cllr J Punchard asked why Wells was not included in the area covered by the Seafront Inspector. Cllr Withington replied that Wells seafront was the responsibility of Holkham Estate.

Cllr N Dixon said that it was a very brief report but the aspect of clarity was lacking and it would have been helpful to have the information requested in the report. Cllr Shires reiterated her earlier point regarding no increase in the budget and the proposal to split the role.

Cllr L Vickers said that other towns paid for their own market provision and managed them very well and she was frustrated that customer service provision had recently

been cut at the Fakenham Connect site but that no savings were being sought elsewhere. Cllr Adams replied that the reduction in service at Fakenham Connect was due to lack of demand. He went on to say that the report related to a minor operational issue, Full Council had to agree and increase in headcount and that was why it was being presented to members.

Cllr V Holliday said that it was not clear what the cost benefit of having two roles instead of one was.

Cllr T FitzPatrick commented that Overview & Scrutiny Committee should have considered the proposals and made recommendations to Full Council. He added that he did not believe a Market Officer was necessary and that these towns should be standing on their 'own two feet'.

The Chief Executive said that Members seemed to have lost focus on the thrust of the report. North Walsham and Fakenham were both charter markets with very long histories that were embedded in the towns. They were held in the market place on public land and highways were closed on market days. The report identified that the market at Sheringham was held on a District Council car park and although it covered its costs commercially, it needed to be managed by NNDC – as it had been for many years. The current role was combined with managing the seafront and it was not an easy role to recruit to. The report proposed a pragmatic approach at no extra financial cost.

Cllr L Withington said the report was brought forward as a savings option with a view to trying to move the markets into alternative management. It wasn't because of a lack of interest in the markets but down to a lack of capacity at this moment in time. The proposal before members protected businesses and town centres for the foreseeable future.

Cllr J Toye said that markets improved the economic vibrancy of the towns and were really important.

It was proposed by Cllr L Withington, seconded by Cllr J Toye and

RESOLVED

To adopt option 1 and agree to an increase in head count in the Leisure and Localities team to allow for the disaggregation of the Markets and Seafront Inspector roles.

1 member abstained.

127 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 9TH MARCH 2026

Recommendation 1:

1. Cabinet Agenda Item 8: Budget Monitoring Period 10 2025/2026:

Cllr L Shires, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Estates & Property Services, introduced this item. She said that the Budget Monitoring P10 report had been to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committee and she thanked the latter for their robust discussion.

Cllr Shires said that the following additional recommendation was being presented to

Full Council. It was coming through at short notice due to the situation in Iran which was impacting on oil prices:

- d) Request the approval for £50,000 of the forecast underspend to be awarded to a domestic oil fuel poverty charity, to support residents across North Norfolk who are experiencing hardship because of current high oil prices*

Cllr Shires advised members to look at recommendations c, d, and e collectively. It was proposed that the Extended Responsibility Producer (ERP) grant was released from reserves to then use that against the service as would have been done if it had been budgeted with that in mind for the recycling expenditure and instead of putting the remainder of the money that was re-released from the recycling revenue budget straight into the general reserve (as had been proposed in previous reports) a small amount of this money would be set aside to help struggling households reliant on domestic heating oil. NNDC would be working with Norfolk Food Bank to provide support

Cllr Shires encouraged anyone facing financial hardship to come forward and seek help. Central Government had recently announced some support but it only amounted to £35 per household using heating oil and this wasn't enough. This was local support that could be put in place quickly.

Cllr Shires proposed the amendment. It was seconded by Cllr A Brown.

Cllr T FitzPatrick commented on the rapid increase in petrol and oil prices and he welcomed the additional recommendation. He sought assurance that the charity reached the far ends of the district. Cllr Shires said that it was important that every member promoted the fund and encouraged people to apply for help. Cllr Fitzpatrick suggested that a guide was shared with parish councils and local organisations.

Cllr Holliday commended the work of the Financial Inclusion Team and said they were extremely helpful.

Cllr J Toye said that some of the people affected by these issues were not those that would be expected and he reiterated the need to promote the fund to everyone.

Cllr S Butikofer asked how quickly the fund would be up and running. Cllr Shires replied that it would commence the following day.

The Chair asked members to vote on the amendment. It was supported unanimously.

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr V Holliday, confirmed that the Committee had supported the recommendations at the meeting on 18th March.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the recommendations, as amended.

It was RESOLVED unanimously to

- a) Note the contents of the report and the current forecast year end position.
- b) Increase the 2025/26 capital budget for Disabled Facilities Grants to £2,317,266. This is to reflect the addition of £118,204 of grant award towards the scheme

- c) Agree to use the Extended Responsibility Producer grant of £1,312,840, which was previously forecasted to be an in-year contribution to reserves, to offset relevant in year recycling expenditure.
- d) Approve for £50,000 of the forecast underspend to be awarded to a domestic oil fuel poverty charity, to support residents across North Norfolk who are experiencing hardship because of current high oil prices
- e) That the resulting underspend of £1,262,840 in the respective recycling revenue budgets be transferred to the General Reserve to mitigate future unfunded new burdens.

Recommendation 2:

- 1. Cabinet Agenda Item 9: Treasury Management Q3 Report 2025/2026

Cllr Shires introduced this item. She said that it had been considered by Governance, Risk & Audit Committee (GRAC) and the recommendations were supported.

It was RESOLVED

That Full Council received the Treasury Q3 Report 2025/2026.

128 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 18 MARCH 2026

The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr V Holliday, confirmed there were no further recommendations to Full Council.

129 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None.

130 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None received.

131 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

Two Notices of Motion had been received. The Chair invited Cllr L Withington, proposer of the motion to introduce the first one.:

- 1. The Right to Play Pledge

Cllr Withington explained that Right to Play Pledge was being promoted by the Norfolk Youth Advisory Board through the Mancroft Advice Project (MAP), which sought to encourage organisations and public bodies to recognise and support children and young people's right to play. She said that the District Council had a strong track record of supporting high-quality public spaces, parks and play areas which benefitted residents, families and visitors across the district. As the Council approached Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), it was important that the value of accessible and inclusive play continued to be recognised within future local authority policy and place-making

She went on to say that play was fundamental to life but often undervalued. Accessibility and inclusivity were 'buzz words' but could be overlooked and consideration was not always given as to what they really meant. It was important to think about everybody having access to play parks. She spoke about all the children, young adults, parents and grandparents who would be accessing play areas and then spoke about the additional challenges faced by children with disabilities and additional needs, who struggled to access traditional play equipment. Sensory needs were also vital and there should be quieter spaces available too. Children should be able to play together, regardless of additional needs.

Cllr Withington said that the Council was already committed to fully accessible and inclusive play areas and the Leas in Sheringham was an example of this.

She commended the motion and said that it was a strong position statement as the Council moved towards a unitary model. Using the S106 money more effectively meant that the best value and benefits would be achieved for play spaces across the district.

Cllr L Shires seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

The Chair invited members to speak:

Cllr P Porter said that she wished to propose the following amendment:

Proposed amendments –

- **Add** wording in italics below
- **Remove** wording crossed out below

Council therefore resolves to:

1. **Sign the Right to Play Pledge**, demonstrating North Norfolk District Council's support for the principle that all children and young people should have access to safe, inclusive and welcoming opportunities for play.
2. **S106 Funding Playpark allocations and sports facilities**

That the Council adopts a policy approach whereby S106 play contributions may, where appropriate and legally permissible, be directed towards strategic play and activity spaces *within the same parish as the development* rather than solely within the boundary of the originating development.

This approach would allow funding to be pooled or directed to locations that:

- Deliver fully inclusive and accessible play equipment
- Provide larger, higher-quality activity spaces
- ~~Serve multiple developments and neighbourhoods~~
- Improve connectivity with walking and cycling routes
- Support family-friendly community spaces that encourage physical activity and social interaction

Cllr Porter said that she wanted to propose the amendment to ensure that smaller parishes were protected and to reduce the risk of funding generated by development in one part of the district being used to benefit communities in entirely different areas. It was a small but important change that would ensure that all parts of North Norfolk would retain access to play provision. By keeping S106 contributions linked

to the parish where development takes place, it could be ensured that the benefits of development were felt directly in the local community and supported a fairer and more transparent distribution of funding.

Cllr V Holliday seconded the amendment. Cllr Adams clarified that if the proposer and seconder agreed with the amendment it would form part of the substantive motion and no debate was required.

Cllr L Shires said that the suggested additional wording made sense for parishes but the deleted words could cause some issues in a larger place such as North Walsham where money could be pooled to create a better, more inclusive play area. She said that she would be happy to accept the highlighted additional wording, if the crossed-out/deleted wording was retained for larger areas. Cllr Withington said she had some concerns as one of the main challenges in creating inclusive play spaces was that the cost of floor space/area to make it fully accessible was very expensive and could even cost more than the play equipment. Small play areas were often not suitable for being made accessible and parishes may not be able to generate the funding to make genuinely accessible play areas.

Cllr Porter said that as it currently stood, the motion included town councils as well as parishes and she was concerned that S106 money from a development in a smaller parish could be used to fund a play area in a nearby town which may not be easy to access by village residents. Cllr Shires acknowledged this concern and suggested that the additional wording was included in the motion but said that serving multiple developments in neighbourhoods was key in towns. She proposed a compromise that villages were protected but that the wording for serving multiple developments and neighbourhoods in towns was retained.

Cllr C Cushing said that he was content to keep in the additional wording and not remove the wording relating to multiple developments.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the additional wording would be included but that the proposed deletion would not proceed.

Cllr Porter proposed that the wording 'within the same parish as the development' but that 'serve multiple developments and neighbourhoods' was not deleted. This was seconded by Cllr V Holliday. When put to the vote, the amendment was supported unanimously and formed part of the substantive motion.

The Chair opened the debate on the substantive motion.

Cllr J Punchard said that having been involved in town council playgrounds over many years and the huge amount of money that had been spent to make them inclusive, it was often the case that play equipment was built on tarmac 'islands' which could not be reached by wheelchair users. This included carers and parents who supported their children's access to the equipment. He said that he supported the motion.

Cllr W Fredericks queried whether it was possible to change policy in the way that was proposed and queried whether the correct process was being followed. The Monitoring Officer advised that members voted in principle and that the detail would be assessed.

Cllr J Toye said that connectivity using walking and cycling routes was key for the towns but was also important between villages too.

Cllr S Penfold said that he was supportive of the motion and said that the Council had a strong record in this area through the Sustainable Communities Fund which had ensured that accessibility and inclusivity were a key part of the application process.

Cllr Shires then spoke as seconder of the motion. She thanked representatives of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) and commended their commitment and focus, particularly on the right to play. She thanked them for their passion and engagement.

The Chair then moved to the vote and it was RESOLVED unanimously

Council therefore resolves to:

3. **Sign the Right to Play Pledge**, demonstrating North Norfolk District Council's support for the principle that all children and young people should have access to safe, inclusive and welcoming opportunities for play.
4. **106 Funding Playpark allocations and sports facilities**

That the Council adopts a policy approach whereby S106 play contributions may, where appropriate and legally permissible, be directed towards strategic play and activity spaces within the same parish as the development rather than solely within the boundary of the originating development.

This approach would allow funding to be pooled or directed to locations that:

- Deliver **fully inclusive and accessible play equipment**
- Provide **larger, higher-quality activity spaces**
- Serve **multiple developments and neighbourhoods**
- Improve **connectivity with walking and cycling routes**
- Support **family-friendly community spaces** that encourage physical activity and social interaction

Developers and planning officers would work together to ensure that residents of the contributing development continue to benefit from the facilities delivered.

5. **Request that officers prepare a short position statement for the authority** outlining the Council's commitment to inclusive and accessible play and highlighting the importance of continuing to ensure accessible and inclusive play, recreation and family-friendly public spaces continue to be prioritised as part of asset management, policy development and place planning through the Local Government Reorganisation process.

The Chair then moved on to the second notice of motion and asked Cllr Brown, the proposer to introduce it.

2. Motion to Council on Fly-tipping

Cllr Brown began saying that there was a developing problem in the district regarding fly-tipping and roadside littering due to years of Government complacency. Numbers were increasing year on year. There were 462 recorded fly tips on public land and 81 on private land between 2023 and 2026. So, the bulk of the liability to clear up fell to NNDC as it was responsible for removal from public land. Fly tipping caused a blight on communities and its removal cost huge amounts of money which could be spent on education, health and other critical services. Ultimately, littering could lead to an increase in council tax due to the rising costs of cleaning up.

Cllr Brown said that North Norfolk was the third best bio-diverse region in Britain and one of the biggest problems faced by wildlife was pollution in the form of waste and rubbish, causing death and serious injury. Roadside litter alone was estimated to kill 3m small animals in the UK every year. Schools should be encouraged to include personal responsibility for litter in their curriculums. Regarding fly-tipping, he said it had been exacerbated by Norfolk County Council's introduction of charging at recycling centres. This had since been replaced by a booking system and reduced opening hours which had contributed to a rise in both reported and unreported fly-tipping. So, the national fines imposed for fly-tipping should be reviewed to ensure that they were matching fixed penalty notices issued by the Council for the same offence. They were currently out of kilter with one another. Lower fines issues by the courts undermined deterrents, weakened enforcement powers and also left councils out of pocket. National sentencing guidelines therefore needed reviewing as a matter of urgency. He said that new legislation was coming through to strengthen powers and the Council needed to be prepared to align with the new measures.

Cllr Brown thanked the local Womble pickers and everyone who gave up their time to keep local communities free from litter. He commended the motion to members.

Cllr C Ringer seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

The Chair opened up the debate to members.

Cllr C Cushing said that he wished to propose the following small amendment:

To add the following as a fifth resolution to Cabinet:

v) Lobby the Government to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1990 so that the Government take financial responsibility for the removal of fly-tipping waste from private land.

Cllr Cushing said that he supported everything that Cllr Brown had said and this was a positive addition to the motion. He said that the figures for fly-tipping were shocking with over 1 million cases of fly-tipping reported on public highways alone in the last year and only 1500 of these were taken to court. He went onto say that Magistrate's courts could impose fines of up to £50k or 12 months imprisonment and the Crown court could impose unlimited fines or 5 years in prison. However, the average fine was £593. He said that the amendment focused on the people who paid the financial brunt of clearing up in many cases and that was private landowners as they were legally responsible for clearing rubbish on their land. He agreed with Cllr Brown that more Government intervention was needed and this may happen if they took financial responsibility for clearing rubbish from private land.

The Chair asked Cllr Brown, as proposer of the motion, if he accepted the amendment. Cllr Brown said that he accepted the intention of the motion but cautioned that private landowners often took out insurance for fly-tipping removal costs and he was concerned that the amendment may imply that private insurance should be removed. He said that he was concerned that it could lead to increases in central taxation because the money would need to come from somewhere.

Cllr V Holliday seconded the amendment. She said that the egregious fly-tipping that was being seen now was on private land and not all private land was owned by wealthy landowners. There were charities, community groups and public bodies that owned private land.

Cllr Brown agreed to accept the amendment and it therefore formed part of the substantive motion.

The Chair then opened the debate on the substantive motion:

Cllr S Butikofer said that it was a huge issue of concern to local residents. She reminded people not to try and tackle fly-tippers themselves but to take photographs where possible and report it to the District Council.

Cllr C Rouse said that he was supportive of the motion and he supported increasing the fines on fly-tipping. He also commended the Wombles for their hard work collecting litter.

Cllr J Toye said that he felt that fly-tipping was particularly prevalent in rural communities and it was important to acknowledge the damage caused to wildlife.

Cllr T FitzPatrick said that since he had been a member of the Council, he had always held it up as an exemplar in dealing with fly-tipping quickly and taking cases to court whenever possible. He reminded members that private land included people's gardens and parking spaces in front of houses and small shop. He was supportive of pushing for the highest possible penalties for fly-tipping.

Cllr Ringer then spoke as seconder of the motion. He said that the rising numbers regarding fly-tipping were quite stark. He had sympathy for private landowners, particularly small community groups. The large majority, however, was dumped on public land and it was the Council's responsibility to clear it up. The tools to effectively prosecute were needed. He highlighted a recent case in his ward where a numberplate had been left in a pile of rubbish but DVLA rules prevented the data linked to it being used without a witness present at the time it was dumped.

Something needed to change centrally to indicate that the government was serious about tackling environmental crime. He also thanked the Wombles and commended their hard work, along with other community groups who gave up their time. He reiterated the advice to leave fly-tipping where it was and report it as soon as possible.

Cllr Brown said that he had nothing further to add.

The Chair asked members to go to the vote and it was RESOLVED unanimously to:

Ask Cabinet to:

- i) Investigate fly-tipping instances and where suitable evidence exists, take appropriate enforcement action possible against those responsible.
- ii) Ensure all fixed penalty notices for littering and fly-tipping to the legal maximum as appropriate
- iii) Promote regularly the "Lets S.C.R.A.P. fly-tipping" campaign to increase awareness of the householder Duty of Care requirements so that they only use registered waste carriers to dispose of their waste.
- iv) Ensure that all businesses in the district have appropriate Duty of Care arrangements in place and take appropriate action where this is found not to be the case.
- v) Lobby the Government to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1990 so that the Government take financial responsibility for the removal of fly-tipping waste from private land

132 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

133 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 7.51 pm.

Chairman

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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>

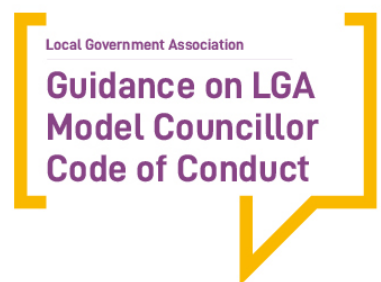
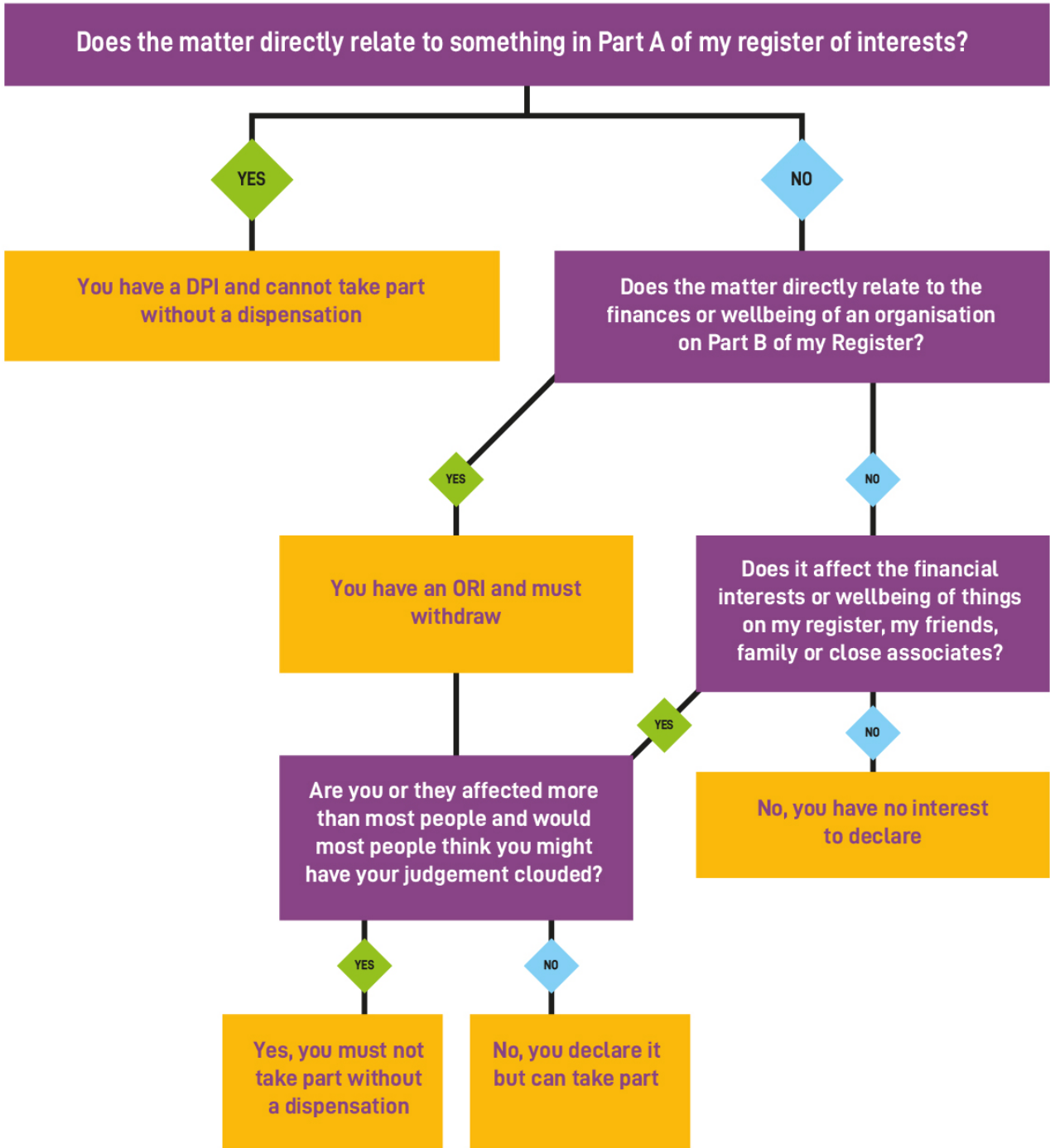
	spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* '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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REVIEW OF ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND PANELS	
Executive Summary	<p>A recent central government consultation entitled “Planning committee reform: statutory consultation on draft Regulations and guidance, included draft regulations setting a limit on the size of committees responsible for determining planning applications (Development Committee). The current committee has 14 members and the maximum size set out in the new regulations is 13 members.</p> <p>A report was taken to Development Committee on 30th April (Appendix A) seeking a steer from committee members on the preferred size and members agreed to recommend a committee of 13 members.</p> <p>Following a change to the size of a committee, the Council is required to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub committees and working parties to ensure that they reflect the political balance of the Council, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made thereunder.</p>
Options considered	This is a statutory report and Full Council is required to approve any change to the political balance and the allocation of seats on committees. Alternative options are therefore not presented.
Consultation(s)	Members of Development Committee have recommended a reduction in the size of the Committee by one member. It is therefore necessary to review the allocation of seats on committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Council approves the change to the size of Development Committee from 14 members to 13. 2. That Council approves the allocation of seats to political groups as shown at Appendix B, taking into consideration any arrangements agreed by the Group Leaders 3. That delegation is given to the Group Leaders to make any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties & panels.

Wards affected	All
Contact Officer	Emma Denny, Democratic Services & Governance Manager, emma.denny@north-norfolk.gov.uk ,

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following recent government guidance on Planning Committee reform, it was necessary to review the size of the Council's Development Committee as, with 14 members, it was above the new maximum limit of 13.
- 1.2 A report was taken to Development Committee on 30th April, seeking a steer on the preferred size of the committee and members resolved to recommend to Full Council that it should comprise 13 members.
- 1.3 Council's duty is to determine the allocation of seats to be filled by appointments by the authority, except the Cabinet. The purpose is to ensure that there is proportionality across all formal activities of the Council, reflecting the overall political composition. It affects all formally constituted committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels which discharge functions on behalf of the authority.

2. Background

- 2.1 Although there has been no change to the political composition of the Council, a change to the size of a committee affects the number of seats allocated to each political group and Council must ensure that the political balance is reflected accordingly.
- 2.2 Section 15(1) of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to review the representation of the different political groups on committees and sub-committees:
 - at, or as soon as practicable after the Annual Meeting of the Council or,
 - where notice is received of a change in the composition of political groups
- 2.3 The Head of Paid Service has a duty, whenever such a review takes place, to submit a report to the Council showing what the allocation of seats, in their opinion, best meet the requirements of the above Act.

The political composition of the Council is outlined below:

Group	No. of members	%
Liberal Democrat	26	65
Conservative	11	27.5
Independent	3	7.5
Total	40	100%

- 2.4 The Council needs to approve the allocation of seats to the political groups on those committees which are required by law to be politically balanced.
- 2.5 The obligation to ensure that there is proportionality in the political composition of the Council's committees extends only to proportionate representation of members of political groups and does not require that a vacant seat is represented.
- 2.6 In carrying out any review, the Council is obliged to adopt the following principles and to give effect to them 'so far as is reasonably practicable':

- a) That not all seats on the Council are allocated to the same political group
- b) That the majority of the seats on the Council are allocated to a particular group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership
- c) Subject to the above, that the number of seats on ordinary committees of the Council which are allocated to each political group, have the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority and
- d) Subject to a) and c) above, that the number of the seats on the Council which are allocated to each group have the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that Council as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Council.
- e) As in previous years, it is proposed that delegation should be given to the Group Leaders to make any changes required to appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties and panels as long as they are in accordance with the political balance. Group Leaders will inform the Democratic Services & Governance Manager of any changes and Members will be informed via email. In addition, and to ensure they changes are recorded formally, an update will be provided to future next meeting of Full Council. It is proposed that this convention is continued to allow appointments to be filled without waiting for approval from Council.

3. Entitlement to Places

- 3.1. The table at Appendix B shows those Committees that are required to be politically balanced. Generally, the approach taken has been to round up percentages where they are above 0.5% or close to 0.5. Proposed changes are highlighted in red.
- 3.2. To date, the convention at NNDC has been that the political balance rules will also apply to working parties – unless they are Cabinet sub-committees. Cabinet sub-committees are not required to be politically balanced but it has historically been the practice at NNDC that they are and for this reason they are included in the table (marked with an asterisk)
- 3.3. As agreed at the meeting of Full Council on 21st May 2025, The Employment & Appeals Committee is required to be politically balanced and therefore the Independent Group will be allocated a seat. It was also agreed that the Independent Group was allocated a seat is on the Standards Committee as it is preferable that this committee has representatives from across the groups to ensure impartiality when assessing complaints. This has been reflected in the proposed seat allocations.
- 3.4. The Member Development Group has not met for some time. Its remit was to prepare the induction programme for members following a District Council election. With Local Government Reorganisation underway and there being no further district elections, it is proposed that this working group is removed from the seat allocations table, reducing the overall number of seats from 92 to 85.
- 3.5. Overall, the percentage entitlement to seats has not changed but the number of seats allocated has (as set out above) and it is as follows:

The Liberal Democrat Group has 65% of seats available (54 seats)

The Conservative Group has 27.5% of committee seats available (25 seats)

The Independent Group has 5% of seats to 7.5% allocated (6 seats)

4. The allocations at Appendix B are suggested by the Democratic Services & Governance Manager. Group Leaders can agree to alternative arrangements as long as the political balance of key committees is not affected. Following the recommendation to reduce the Development Committee by 1 seat and to remove Member Development Group from the seat allocations, the Liberal Democrats will lose one seat on Development Committee. No other allocations are affected.

5. Corporate Priorities

This is a statutory report.

6. Financial and Resource Implications

This is statutory report and there are no financial or resource implications.

7. Legal Implications

Full Council is required to approve any change to the size of a committee and the to ensure that the political balance of the Council is reflected in the seat allocations. A failure to do would be a breach of the statutory requirements.

8. Risks

As highlighted above, a failure to approve a change in the political balance of the Council would be a breach of the statutory requirements.

9. Net Zero Target

N/A

10. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

N/A

11. Community Safety issues

N/A

Conclusion and Recommendations

Following a proposed change to the size of Development Committee – from 14 seats to 13, it is necessary to review the allocation of seats to the groups to ensure that the political balance of the Council is reflected.

Recommendations:

1. That Council approves the change to the size of Development Committee from 14 members to 13.
2. That Council approves the allocation of seats to political groups as shown at **Appendix B**, taking into consideration any arrangements agreed by the Group Leaders
3. That delegation is given to the Group Leaders to make any appointments to committees, sub-committees, working parties & panels.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REFORM – Discussion Paper in relation to size of Development Committee and Changes to Constitution Reflecting proposed National Scheme of Delegation and Member Training

1) Background

1.1. On 26 March 2026, central government opened a consultation titled “Planning committee reform: statutory consultation on draft Regulations and guidance”.

1.2. The introduction to the consultation sets out that:

“In the King’s Speech, the government announced that it would modernise the way planning committees operate to best deliver for communities and support much needed development. To achieve this, the government introduced measures through the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (the Act) to:

- give a new power to the Secretary of State to set out which planning functions should be delegated to planning officers for a decision and which should instead go to a planning committee or sub-committee
- give a new power to the Secretary of State to control the size and composition of planning committees
- impose a new requirement for Members of planning committees to be trained, and certified, in key elements of planning”

1.3. As part of the consultation, the government have issued draft regulations and further commentary on the draft regulations and implications for the Council are set out in the report below. A copy of the draft regulations is attached at **Appendix A**.

1.4. The consultation ran for four weeks and closed on 23 April 2026.

2) Size and Composition of Committee

2.1. Regulation 7 of the draft regulations refers to a limit on the size of committee determining applications. The maximum limit specified by the regulations is **13 Members**. However, it is a matter for each Council to decide how many Members should be on the Development Committee up to the maximum specified by the regulations.

2.2. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) note that “The number of Members of a planning committee is partly influenced by the political make-up of a council. Planning decisions should never be made based on political views, but a council will normally want a planning committee to include a representative number of councillors based on the political make-up of the council”.

2.3. Currently the Development Committee comprises 14 Members and the meeting is quorate with 7 Members present. Changing the size of Development

Committee will have implications for the political make-up of the Committee. In reviewing the number of Committee Members, an odd number of members may be considered sensible in terms of helping avoid the potential for tied votes requiring the Chairman's casting vote.

- 2.4. A report to FULL COUNCIL AGM on 20 May 2026 will set out and agree the number of Members on each Committee across the Council and this would be an opportune time to reflect on the draft regulations when setting the size of the Development Committee.
- 2.5. Below at Table 1 is a breakdown of potential options in reducing the number of Members on Development Committee. Whilst it is ultimately a matter for FULL COUNCIL to determine, a Development Committee comprising 11 Members would seem a sensible option to consider, reflecting the future reduced workloads expected following changes to be brought in by the national scheme of delegation, as set out in the report below at Section 3.

Table 1 - Number of Committee Members

Number of Committee Members	Quorum	Comments
13	7	Maximum Permissible under draft regulations
12	6	Even number
11	6	Recommended number
10	5	Even Number
9	5	The fewer the members on Committee, the greater the pressure on each member when taking decisions
8	4	
7	4	

- 2.6. **RECOMMENDATION - That the Development Committee note the contents of Section 2 of this report and indicate a preference on the size of Development Committee for consideration at the AGM in May 2026 and reported to FULL COUNCIL.**

3) National Scheme of Delegation and revised Constitution

- 3.1. Whilst North Norfolk District Council delegates approximately 97% of planning decisions to Officers, the government's intention is that nationally, fewer

planning applications will be reported to Development Committee for determination, and more cases will be delegated to Officers.

- 3.2. The draft regulations (as set out at **Appendix A**) prescribe two things:
- a) A list of application types which would ALWAYS be determined by Officers (specified at Schedule 1 of the Regulations); and
 - b) A list of application types which should ALWAYS be determined by Officers (specified at Schedule 2 of the Regulations) **unless** the proposal raises:
 - one or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area, or
 - one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.
- 3.3. For those application types falling within Schedule 2 of the Regulations, the decision whether to actually call the matter to Committee rests with nominated Members and Officers. The list of nominated Members and Officers is a matter for each Council to decide but is likely to include the Chair and Vice Chair of Development Committee and Assistant Director for Planning and the Development Manager. Those nominated Members and Officers will undertake a “gatekeeper” function and it is a matter for each Local Planning Authority to decide the rules that will apply to those gatekeeper functions (to be set out as part of a new scheme of delegation).
- 3.4. The government expects the new national scheme of delegation to come into effect on **30 September 2026**.
- 3.5. To meet the deadline, the Council’s Constitution would need to be amended to reflect both the nationally prescribed scheme of delegation and the gatekeeper functions to determine which of the application types listed at Schedule 2 in the Regulations should be referred to Development Committee for determination. The expected route and timeframe for amending the Constitution would be via the **Constitution Working Party on 30 June 2026** and then to **FULL COUNCIL on 23 September 2026** for final sign-off.
- 3.6. The reality of the changes proposed in the regulations means that the Development Committee would not determine (amongst other things):
- Householder planning applications;
 - Housing schemes of less than 10 dwellings;
 - Minor commercial applications;
 - The majority of reserved matters approval applications;
 - Permission in Principle applications;
 - Condition discharges (including Biodiversity Net Gain plans);
- 3.7. Whilst the type of applications listed in Schedule 2 of the Regulations include: listed building consents, adverts and Tree Preservation Orders and all those application types not listed within Schedule 1 of the Regulations, the

“gatekeeper” function will need to ensure that only those applications needing to be referred to Development Committee are so referred otherwise there is a risk that the number of cases delegated to Officers will fall and which would undermine the purpose of the Regulations.

- 3.8. For context, in 2025, there were 12 Development Committee meetings determining 53 applications (average of 4.4 applications per meeting). Of those 53 applications, 41 (77%) were “non-major” and 12 (23%) were “major” applications. Of the 12 meetings that took place in 2025, only 7 meetings included “major” applications on the agenda.
- 3.9. Based on the national scheme of delegation and subject to the “gateway test” being signed-off as part of a revised constitution, there is a likelihood of reduced frequency of Development Committee meetings taking place and, when they do, there is likely to be a reduction in the number of items on the agenda. This provides a justification for a reduced size of the Development Committee down to 11 Members, as recommended at paragraph 2.5 above.
- 3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, there are provisions within the Regulation guidance in relation to planning applications submitted by the Council, Members or Officers and which sets out that:

“Where applications are made by the authority itself or an officer or member of the authority or an entity owned or controlled (whether wholly or partly) by that authority or any of its members or officers, we recognise that there may be cases where, in the interests of transparency and public accountability, it may be appropriate for some applications to be referred to a planning committee or sub-committee even if they do not raise any significant planning, economic, social or environmental issues. These cases can be referred to the committee without the need for consideration of the criteria set out in regulation 5(2). Where no such referral has been made, they will be determined by an officer.”

As is currently the case in the existing Constitution, provision will be made within the amended Constitution to set out how such applications by the Council, Members and Officers will be determined.

- 3.11. **RECOMMENDATION – That the Development Committee note the contents of Section 3 of this report.**

4) Mandatory Training for members of Development Committee

- 4.1. Whilst the government previously indicated it would take forward a requirement for mandatory training for Members of Development Committee, this does not form part of the current consultation.
- 4.2. In its response to the May 2025 technical consultation on planning reform, central government indicated that:

“The government has noted the varying views on how we should take forward our powers to implement mandatory member training from the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025. We note, in particular, the support for the proposals to have training administered on a national level. The government’s priority is to implement the national scheme of delegation and size of committee reforms first. However, the government continues to recognise the importance of effective mandatory training for planning committee members, and will embark on further stakeholder engagement to design a credible and cost-effective system taking account of the views from this consultation.”

- 4.3. Absent a mandatory National Member Training programme, Member Training on Planning matters will continue to be delivered by Officers on relevant matters when appropriate.
- 4.4. **RECOMMENDATION – That the Development Committee note the contents of Section 4 of this report.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- i. **That the Development Committee note the contents of Section 2 of this report and indicate a preference on the size of Development Committee for consideration at the AGM in May 2026 and reported to FULL COUNCIL.**
- ii. **That the Development Committee note the contents of Sections 3 of this report regarding the National Scheme of Delegation and revised Constitution**
- iii. **That the Development Committee note the contents of Section 4 of this report regarding mandatory Training for Members of Development Committee.**

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		Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Independent	TOTAL			
Members		26	11	3	40			
Expressed as %		65%	27.5	7.5	100%			
Committee	No. of Seats Currently	Entitled Places (exact)	Entitled Places (rounded)	Entitled Places (exact)	Entitled Places (rounded)			
Licensing Committee	15	9.75	10	4.12	4	1.125	1	15
Development Committee	13	8.45	*8	3.575	4	0.975	1	13
Overview & Scrutiny	12	7.8	8	3.3	3	0.9	1	12
Planning Policy & Built Heritage WP	12	7.8	8	3.3	3	0.9	1	12
Standards Committee	7	4.55	4	1.92	2	0.525	1	7
**EAC	5	3.25	3	1.38	1	0.375	1	5
Governance, Risk & Audit Committee	6	3.9	4	1.65	2	0.45	0	6
Constitution Working Party	5	3.25	3	*1.38	2	0.375	0	5
Joint Staff Consultative Committee	5	3.25	3	*1.38	2	0.375	0	5
Council Tax Support Working Party	5	3.25	3	*1.38	2	0.375	0	5
TOTAL	85	55.25	54	23.38	25	6.375	6	85

*Reduction of 1 seat following resizing of the committee

**Adjusted in May 2025 to allow Independent Group representation on the EAC to ensure cross-party representation.

Please note that all of the above are politically balanced. This can only be waived with the agreement of the Group Leaders (see accompanying report)

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Councillor access to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)	
Executive Summary	<p>In October 2025, the Government launched a consultation on proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), including restoring access for councillors and extending access to certain elected mayors in England.</p> <p>The objectives included supporting recruitment and retention in local government, promoting diversity, and achieving consistency with arrangements in devolved administrations.</p> <p>The Local Government Pension Scheme (Elected Member Pensions) Regulations 2026 amended the LGPS Regulations to reinstate access for councillors in England and came into force in April 2026. Under these revised arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - councillors are eligible to join the LGPS in respect of their elected role; - pensionable pay is based on eligible allowances (not expenses); and - elected membership is treated distinctly from any LGPS membership arising from any other local government employment.
Options considered	No alternative options are proposed.
Consultation(s)	This report reflects a change in national legislation following a government consultation undertaken in 2025.
Recommendations	<p>That Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the recent legislative changes restoring access to the LGPS for councillors in England on an opt-in basis from Monday 11 May 2026, 2. Amend the Members Allowances Scheme to reflect the change.
Reasons for recommendations	To ensure the Members Allowances Scheme reflects this legislative change.
Background papers	Local Government Act 1972: Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales: Access for Elected Members - government response - GOV.UK

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr T Adams, Leader
Contact Officer	Emma Denny, Democratic Services & Governance Manager Emma.denny@north-norfolk.gov.uk

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

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 This report provides an overview of the historic position relating to councillor access to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

1.2 The report is provided for information to assist Members' understanding of the current position and the policy context in which those arrangements have developed.

2. Introduction & Background

2.1 The LGPS is a statutory, defined benefit occupational pension scheme primarily established for employees of local authorities and related bodies. Traditionally, councillors have been regarded as officeholders rather than employees, receiving allowances rather than salaries and as a result, councillors were historically excluded from the scheme.

2.2 From April 2003, regulations were introduced allowing councillors in England to become members of the LGPS, subject to their authority's scheme of members' allowances. This reflected concerns that the time commitment associated with being a councillor could adversely affect individuals' ability to build pension provision through other employment. At that time, each council determined locally whether access to the LGPS would be offered.

2.3 In December 2012, the Government announced its intention to remove access to the LGPS for councillors in England. The rationale was that councillors were not employees and that membership of an occupational pension scheme was inconsistent with their status as elected representatives receiving allowances rather than pay. The Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014 gave effect to this policy.

2.4 In October 2025, the Government launched a consultation on proposed changes to the LGPS, including restoring access for councillors and extending access to certain elected mayors in England. The objectives included supporting recruitment and retention in local government, promoting diversity, and achieving consistency with arrangements in devolved administrations.

2.5 The Local Government Pension Scheme (Elected Member Pensions) Regulations 2026 amended the LGPS Regulations to reinstate access for councillors in England and came into force in April 2026. Under these revised arrangements:

1. Councillors are eligible to join the LGPS in respect of their elected role;
2. Pensionable pay is based on eligible allowances (not expenses); and

3. Elected membership is treated distinctly from any LGPS membership arising from any other local government employment. This is on an opt-in basis from the Monday after the May elections (11 May 2026).

3. Proposals and Options

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme is amended to include the statutory changes regarding access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

4. Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 As the level of take-up by Members is not yet determined, the financial implications are not clear. A further update will be brought to Full Council regarding any additional budgetary provision that may be required.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

Any financial impact arising from individual councillor membership of the LGPS is addressed through established pension fund arrangements and employer contribution rates. As yet, take up is not known so budgetary provision cannot be established. A further report will be presented once the financial impact is clearer, setting out the required budgetary provision.

The Government expects software providers to make necessary updates over the course of the scheme year, and for annual benefit statements to be available to elected members in line with Regulation 89 of the LGPS Regulations 2013, i.e. by the end of August 2027.

5. Legal Implications

This report reflects a change in national legislation following a government consultation undertaken in 2025.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The implications of the reintroduction of councillor access to the LGPS have been set out in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Elected Member Pensions) Regulations 2026.

6. Risks

No specific risks arise directly from this report. Pension scheme governance is managed through existing LGPS regulatory and administrative frameworks.

7. Net Zero Target

Not applicable.

8. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The restoration of access to the LGPS may support equality of opportunity by reducing barriers to standing for elected office.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Local Government Pension Scheme (Elected Member Pensions) Regulations 2026 amended the LGPS Regulations to reinstate access for councillors in England and came into force in April 2026. Under these revised arrangements:

- councillors are eligible to join the LGPS in respect of their elected role;
- pensionable pay is based on eligible allowances (not expenses); and
- elected membership is treated distinctly from any LGPS membership arising from any other local government employment.

It is therefore **recommended** that:

Council resolves to:

1. Note the recent legislative changes restoring access to the LGPS for councillors in England on an opt-in basis from Monday 11 May 2026,
2. Amend the Members Allowances Scheme to reflect the change.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE – RESOURCE REVIEW	
Executive Summary	<p>This report sets out resourcing options for the Development Management Service to ensure it can deliver timely planning decisions in the wider public interest following adoption of the Councils Local Plan on 17 December 2025 and the current/expected increase in planning application submissions.</p> <p>With increased planning fee income, now is the right time to review resourcing options to ensure a clearer division of labour and increased resource capacity to help maximise the value of skills and experience already in the team and drive forward improved planning outcomes and timeliness of decision making.</p>
Options considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option One – Do Nothing (Not Recommended) • Option Two – Re-Assign Staffing Across the Wider Planning Service (Not Recommended) • Option Three – Managed Growth (Recommended) which includes the creation of four new posts
Consultation(s)	Consultations have been undertaken with the HR Advisor for Planning, Group Accountant, S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APPROVE “Option Three – Managed Growth” as set out in the report across paragraphs 3.14 to 3.30 to deliver a re-structured DM Service as set out at Appendix A Figure 2 • Authorise immediate recruitment to the four new posts.
Reasons for recommendations	To ensure the Development Management Service is appropriately resourced reflecting increased application workload following adoption of the Council’s Local Plan
Background papers	N/A

Wards affected	N/A
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Andrew Brown (Planning Portfolio Holder)
Contact Officer	Geoff Lyon, Development Manager geoff.lyon@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Our Greener Future Developing Our Communities Meeting our Housing Need Investing In Our Local Economy & Infrastructure A Strong, Responsible & Accountable Council
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	N/A
Council Policies & Strategies	Local Plan Adopted 17 December 2025

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes - This is a departure decision which would be outside of the agreed base budget framework for the Development Management Service but is to be supported from predicted increased planning fee income.
Has the public interest test been applied	N/A
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	CLT confirmed their agreement to the principle of using increased planning fee income and to support Option 3 as set out at Appendix A Figure 2.

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. To consider resourcing options for the Development Management Service aligned with the anticipated increase in planning applications and planning fee income following recent adoption of the Local Plan.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1. The Development Management Service is responsible for the effective and efficient processing of all planning and related applications for the District Council as Local Planning Authority.

- 2.2. The Development Management (DM) Service currently has the following staff resources:

Role	No. of Posts	FTE
Development Manager	1	1.0
Team Leader	3	3.0
Senior Planner	8	7.06
Planning Officer	2	2.0
Trainee Planning Officer	2	2.0

Household Planning Assistant	2	1.54
Total	18	16.6

- 2.3. The DM Service are carrying a workload of approximately 500 live cases including approximately 35 “major” Planning applications, 370 “non-major” with the remainder being requests for pre-application advice.
- 2.4. As Local Planning Authority, the performance of the Development Management Service is measured by government against “Speed” and “Quality” criteria (i.e. decisions made against nationally set determination time-frames (8/13 weeks) and number of appeals allowed against the total number of decisions measured.
- 2.5. When measured against those government criteria, the Development Management Service has performed very well over recent years being in the upper quartile for Speed and Quality and awarded “platinum” status in late 2024. Great efforts have been made as part of the Planning Service Improvement Plan to drive up performance leading to a notable reduction in the number of complaints and improved customer satisfaction.
- 2.6. It is widely recognised that the Planning System is becoming ever more complex with more requirements now falling within the sphere of planning consideration including biodiversity net gain and nutrient neutrality, amongst other things. This is set against a background of the ever-increasing threat of legal challenge from those wishing to delay or prevent housing and other growth within the District. The cognitive load now placed on our officers within the Development Management Team is the greatest it has ever been and, even with efficient processes and procedures in place, this significantly impacts the amount of work that can reasonably be completed by each officer per week.
- 2.7. Whilst recent performance figures have slipped a little, partly as a result of long-standing cases affected by nutrient neutrality being determined, it is considered important that the reputation of the Council associated with improvement within the Development Management Service is not undermined through lack of adequate resourcing aligned with an expected increase in planning application submissions over the coming years following adoption of the new Local Plan on 17 December 2025.
- 2.8. With the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation now clearer in terms of confirming that the entirety of North Norfolk will form part of a new East Norfolk Council, this gives some certainty moving forward in terms of likely resourcing demands aligned with future growth ambitions.
- 2.9. The Council’s new Local Plan was adopted by Full Council on 17 December 2025 to cover the period 2024 to 2040. This replaces the Core Strategy adopted in 2008. The Local Plan, amongst a suite of new policies, seeks to deliver nearly 10,000 new dwellings across the plan period through a combination of 27 site allocations, growth within 33 newly designated small growth villages, small sites of less than 10 dwellings, windfall sites and large sites with planning permission.
- 2.10. To put the above into context, over the next three years (2026/27 to 2028/9) over 2,200 dwellings are expected to be built (circa 714 per annum) rising to over 800+ dwellings per annum for subsequent years. To deliver the Council’s housing growth ambitions, a pipeline of planning permissions will need to be

delivered which requires timely planning decisions, especially those on allocated sites. Whilst a recently adopted Local Plan will see an increase in planning fees for this Council as allocated sites come forward (e.g. the recently validated **North Walsham western extension for 437 residential properties at £229,143** with further applications to follow to complete this 1800 home development) this requires an appropriately resourced planning service which is crucial to dealing with the planning applications and maintaining a pipeline of planning decisions and it is important that resourcing is reviewed periodically. Now is the right time to undertake that review. It needs to be recognised that Major planning applications will require experienced planners to drive the development forward and the team is facing increased demand. Fakenham Urban Extension and other significant developments will follow.

- 2.11. Whilst planning fees are currently set nationally, central government have recognised the importance of adequately resourced planning departments. The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 included the capability for the Secretary of State to introduce Regulations. This would enable Local Planning Authorities to set a charge for planning applications with fees charged not exceeding cost recovery and are expected to be mostly ring-fenced to deliver planning functions. The government “expects cost recovery to lead to improved performance in the timeliness and quality of decision-making”.
- 2.12. On 23 March 2026, central government released its consultation on “Fees for Planning Applications” indicating that it was seeking to “establish a new national default fee schedule, based on 90% of estimated costs, to bring planning fees to a level closer to cost recovery and act as a baseline from which a new local fee setting model will operate”.
- 2.13. Recruiting experienced planners remains a challenge nationally and with planning fees expected to rise and demand for additional planning resources likely to increase the competition for planning staff, it is imperative for this Council to be at the forefront of change. Delay will only make the resourcing task harder to undertake.
- 2.14. Whilst there will undoubtedly be continued pressures to manage Council spending over the coming years aligned with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the government’s announcement on 25 March 2026 has made clear that the entirety of the geographical area of North Norfolk District would be subsumed within a new East Norfolk Unitary Council. This is helpful when seeking to understand the likely workload and staffing demands necessary to maintain business as usual for critical services such as planning. This paper therefore explores a range of possible resourcing options to ensure the Development Management service has a degree of resilience and capacity to manage the workloads ahead of Local Government Reorganisation taking effect and beyond.

3. Proposals and Options

3.1. Option One – Do Nothing (Not Recommended)

- 3.2. This option seeks to see no resourcing growth beyond base budgets between now and LGR taking effect and is based on a continuation of base budget staffing levels set out in paragraph 2.2 above.

- 3.3. Officers would be asked to manage increasing application workloads post Local Plan adoption for an extended period of time.
- 3.4. Key advantages of this option would be an expected increase in planning fees during this period (associated with increased workloads and rises in nationally set fees) which could help to substantially fund running of the wider planning service and cross-fund other non fee-earning service areas.
- 3.5. Whilst Officers would undoubtedly seek to do their best to manage a notable increase in work, Officer productivity is expected to be detrimentally impacted, especially once Officers begin to feel overwhelmed with work and unable to manage their workloads. Officers may seek to leave the authority, exacerbating workload pressures.
- 3.6. This option would increase the risk of mistakes and errors being made across the Service. Delays in processing applications and mistakes and errors will lead to an increase in service level complaints and inevitably lead to upheld Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints with potential risk of Ombudsmen complaints also being upheld resulting in reputational damage. Delays also risk the return of planning fees under the government's planning guarantee and appeals to the Planning Inspectorate based on non-determination of applications.
- 3.7. This option is not recommended for the reasons set out above. If this option is chosen then an immediate review of services undertaken by the Development Management Team would need to be completed in terms of what activities the service should prioritise and which should be de-prioritised or stopped altogether aligned with the workload capacity of the team. This would have political and reputational implications for the Council.
- 3.8. Option Two – Re-Assign Staffing Across the Wider Planning Service (Not Recommended)**
- 3.9. This option seeks to utilise qualified planners not currently within the Development Management Service to assist with the determination of planning applications.
- 3.10. Existing job descriptions across the Development Management and Planning Policy Teams provide resourcing flexibility. What this would mean is that post holders in the Planning Policy team could be redeployed to roles within the Development Management Service (and vice versa) depending on workload demands and fluctuations.
- 3.11. Whilst the Local Plan was only adopted on 17 December 2025, government have indicated an expectation that North Norfolk District Council will commence an immediate Local Plan review. This reflects the fact that housing numbers in the adopted plan are at a considerably lower level than now expected in the most recent version of the National Planning Policy Framework. A new Plan would likely see a near doubling of annual housing numbers required across the plan period. Government expect plan reviews to be completed within 30 months and this brings with it significant resource demands.
- 3.12. With work now already underway on a new Plan, the Planning Policy Team are already looking at resourcing requirements necessary to match government delivery expectations. As such, there is no spare resource capacity to re-deploy

Planning Policy officers to the DM Service. In any event, whilst some Policy Officers have DM experience, others have less so or no experience in determining planning applications which would have reduced the effectiveness of this option in the short term.

3.13. Option two is not recommended for the reasons set out above.

3.14. Option Three – Managed Growth (Recommended)

3.15. This option would see the creation of four new posts funded by an increase in planning application fees together with a modest restructuring of the team with the intention of managing workload demand and to free up existing resources to better handle caseloads commensurate with job roles. With an increase in major planning applications, more experienced staff are required together with capacity to support and develop teams.

3.16. In coming to decisions about growth, recognition needs to be given to the fact that the Development Management Service saw **£280,000** of additional fee income in 2025/26, due in part to statutory fee increases, and with housing growth expected to increase following adoption of the Local Plan and planning fees also set to increase above inflation, the amount of growth proposed through the proposed addition of four posts would be offset by expected additional fee income, allowing for other unforeseen costs

3.17. This option would see the creation of

- **2 x Senior Planning Officer roles (2 FTE),**
- **1 x Planning Officer role (1 FTE) and**
- **1 x Household Planning Assistant role (1 FTE).**

2 x Senior Planning Officer roles

3.18. With the current structure (See **Appendix A** Fig.1), some of the heaviest workload pressures sit with the three Team Leaders who are responsible for a number of critical functions within the DM Service including reviewing and allocating new applications, managing team workloads and performance and reviewing and signing off the majority of the 2,000+ planning decisions issued by the Council each year in addition to a small caseload of their own. With increased workloads, the ability for three Team Leaders to deliver these critical functions is put under further strain and this leads to increased risk of mistakes and errors being made. To relieve the workload pressures, it is critically important that work can be pushed down to an appropriate level to maximise the value of skills and experience already in the team.

3.19. With a new Local Plan now adopted and a number of larger applications already submitted and more applications to come, it is important that there are enough experienced Senior Officers to pick up the expected application workload. Some of the larger applications will be time and resource demanding (often commensurate with the size of planning fees) and this will require a careful balancing of workloads to ensure the Development Management Service can maintain and improve planning outcomes and timeliness of decision making which are critical in achieving good planning outcomes for all of our customers.

- 3.20. The creation of 2 x Senior Planning Officer positions will provide the capacity and experience needed to help ease current workload pressures in the determination of major planning applications enabling a greater spread of workload to an appropriate level to maximise the value of skills and experience already in the team. This, associated with the other posts and a minor restructure, will increase capacity and resilience for the Service.
- 3.21. **The Senior Planning Officer roles are proposed on a permanent full-time basis.** This follows advice from the HR Advisor for Planning that “Fixed term contracts must be used for fixed term work. They should only be used where there is clear, time limited need, such as delivering a defined project or covering an absence. While funding constraints can justify fixed term arrangements, fixed term employees are legally entitled to the same legal rights as their permanent counterparts. Under employment legislation ending a fixed term contract is considered dismissal, this means employers must have legal grounds to dismiss. Most commonly, this is on grounds of redundancy (i.e. the work the employee was employed to do has ceased or diminished), given that the demand is unlikely to reduce or cease, there would be no justification to end the contract fairly. If we could justify redundancy due to loss of funding or a change in service structure, all employees on the same job description (or comparable JD) would have to be included in the redundancy pool, put at risk, and participate in a competitive selection process”.
- 3.22. Given the risks outlined above, it is evident that the employment of new 2 x Senior Planning Officer posts would be needed well beyond a fixed term contract and this is evidenced through increasing housing numbers in the Local Plan which are set to near double as part of the next Local Plan based on government set methodology for calculating housing supply requirements. These will translate into planning applications which will need to be determined whether that be under North Norfolk District Council or East Norfolk Council Unitary Authority.

Planning Officer Role

- 3.23. With national challenges in recruiting experienced planners, the Council has had greater success through developing our own talent and this is evidenced through four existing officers having already completed their Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) accredited planning qualifications with the Council and going on to become Planners and then Senior Planners. There are three other officers currently going through the process of gaining their RTPI accredited qualifications. These people are our future managers and leaders and, even with LGR, it is important for the future success of the DM Service and delivery of business as usual that a pipeline of talent is maintained and developed, especially given the national recruitment challenges.
- 3.24. The Planning Officer role provides resource capacity for the team in picking up small/medium scale applications and helps free up capacity for Senior Planners to pick up the larger and more complex applications and leaves the household planning assistants to pick up the householder applications.
- 3.25. **The Planning Officer role is proposed on a permanent full-time basis** for the same reasons set out at paragraph 3.21 which apply to the Senior Planner roles following HR Advisor input.

- 3.26. A key benefit of creating a Planning Officer role is that, in the event that there are difficulties recruiting to the post, this would allow a Trainee Planner to be employed on a career graded post with the successful candidate becoming a Planning Officer once they have completed their qualifications.
- 3.27. With Apprenticeship Levy funding for Level 7 (master's level) apprenticeships now restricted to individuals under 22, this means that most applicants for a Trainee Planning Officer role would be ineligible to undertake the Chartered Town Planner Masters Degree Apprenticeship run by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and where two trainees are currently attending. Instead, trainees would need to undertake more traditional Level 7 planning qualifications. A 28-month part time MSc in Town Planning course at ARU would currently cost **£5,850** per year and these costs would need to be drawn from existing service training budgets.

Household Planning Assistant Role

- 3.28. Householder applications remain the most frequent application type determined by the Council with more than 440 applications determined in 2025. With the current structure (See **Appendix A Fig.1**), there are currently only two designated household planning assistants (1.54 FTE) which means an average householder caseload of 286 per FTE post (based on 2025 determinations). Given that the highest performing members of staff in the DM Service over recent years delivered between 180-200 decisions each per year, the current Householder Planning Assistant staffing rates rely on householder applications also being picked up by more senior staff members, which reduces their capacity for more complex applications. The proposed 1.0 FTE addition of a Household Planning Assistant would enable an average householder caseload of 174 per FTE post (based on 2025 determinations). This is a more achievable workload and also allows in supporting the wider team through discharge of condition applications, amongst other things.
- 3.29. **The Household Planning Assistant role is proposed on a permanent full-time basis** for the same reasons set out at paragraph 3.21 which apply to the Team Leader role follow HR Advisor input.

Wider Structure Review

- 3.30. This proposal involves an associated minor restructuring of teams (see **Appendix A Figure 2**) to accommodate the new posts and to try and ensure some balance across the three teams in terms of officers and experience levels. The aim of the restructure is that Team Leaders will have only a very small caseload of their own, the bulk of the complex applications (major applications) will be picked up by the Senior Planning Officers with Planning Officers picking up small majors and larger minor applications and Trainee Planning Officers picking up the smaller minor applications and Householder Planning Assistants picking up the Householder cases. This clearer division of labour and increased resource capacity will help maximise the value of skills and experience already in the team and drive forward improved planning outcomes and timeliness of decision making which are critical in achieving good planning outcomes for all of our customers.

4. Corporate Priorities

- 4.1. Having an adequately resourced Development Management Service helps the Council to meet various Corporate Plan Objectives.
- 4.2. **Our Greener Future** – Ensuring that Officers help protect and enhance the special landscape and ecological value of North Norfolk whilst improving the biodiversity of the district. Strengthening the ability for local communities to deliver on local environmental ambitions and priorities, many of which require the grant of planning permission to help secure.
- 4.3. **Developing Our Communities** – Through supporting timely planning applications associated with developing further the leisure facilities provided across the District. Helping ensure planning applications help create active environments for all ages and abilities including contributing through S106 obligations to help upgrade essential services.
- 4.4. **Meeting our Housing Need** – through timely issuing of housing related planning decisions (including allocated sites within the new Local Plan) and assessment of follow on matters including discharge of conditions including mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 4.5. **Investing In Our Local Economy & Infrastructure** – through adequate business support working with the economic development team to help secure inward investment and to help businesses navigate the planning system in a timely manner. Securing S106 obligations including upgrading infrastructure which can help support jobs and growth.
- 4.6. **A Strong, Responsible & Accountable Council** – Through realising service efficiencies without compromising service standards and outcomes and maximising the opportunity to deliver the growth that the District needs. Creating a working culture for the Development Management Service that empowers and fosters an ambitious, motivated workforce.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1. Preferred Option 3 – Managed Growth will result in an increase to the base budget as set out below. Working with the Group Accountant, the following costings are estimated:

Proposed Role	Cost per annum
2 x Senior Planning Officers	£115,614 per annum
Planning Officer	£50,154 per annum
Household Planning Assistant	£42,804 per annum
Total 2026/27 Base	£208,572 per annum

- 5.2. Factoring in staffing underspends (£47,000), proposed growth would actually amount to **£160,866**.
- 5.3. However, in coming to decisions about growth, recognition needs to be given to the fact that the Development Management Service saw **£280,000** of additional fee income in 2025/26 and with housing growth expected to increase following

adoption of the Local Plan and planning fees also set to increase above inflation, the amount of growth proposed through the proposed addition of three posts would be more than offset by expected additional fee income, allowing for other unforeseen costs.

- 5.4. With additional expected workloads, resource demand will also increase hence the requirement to act promptly in ensuring the DM Service can accommodate the additional resource demands whilst offering the level of customer service expected of a strong, responsible and accountable Council.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The net increase in establishment of three posts is subject to Full Council approval. If the additional application fee is realised then the net financial impact on the MTFs will be limited. For prudence, the budget impacts will be grossed up to fully reflect the additional cost burden. It is recommended that any unused capacity be proactively offered up to partner local authorities forming the successor East Norfolk Council.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. Progressing with Option Three does not give rise to significant legal implications.
- 6.2. Progressing with Option One (the do nothing approach) increases the potential risk of legal errors in the processing of planning applications, particularly as Officers begin to feel overwhelmed with work and unable to manage their workloads which increase the risk of mistakes and errors being made across the Service

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section.

The report is before Members as it recommends an increase in headcount. However, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant increase in financial strain.

7. Risks

7.1. Option One – Do Nothing (Not Recommended)

This option carries significant financial and reputational risk for the Council associated with a service which would be unable to fulfil its statutory obligations in terms of timeliness of decision making. Officer productivity is expected to be detrimentally impacted, especially once Officers begin to feel overwhelmed with work and unable to manage their workloads increasing the risk of mistakes and errors being made across the Service. Officers may seek to leave the authority, exacerbating workload pressures. With increased workloads and under

resourcing, the number of upheld complaints will increase. Delays also risk the return of planning fees under the government's planning guarantee.

7.2. Option Two – Re-Assign Staffing Across the Wider Planning Service (Not Recommended)

This option carries some risk for the DM Service from potentially inexperienced staff moving to the DM team but the much greater risk is associated with impacts on the Planning Policy Team and the delivery of the next Local Plan, especially with the 30-month delivery targets set out by central government.

7.3. Option Three – Managed Growth (Recommended)

This option is not without risk. The primary risk would be the failure to recruit to new roles, especially the Senior Officer roles which are critical in reducing the work pressures associated with an increase in larger applications. If recruitment is delayed due to an inability to attract the right people into posts then the risks associated with Option One would come into effect. It has to be acknowledged that the Council's pay and grading structure makes this Council less attractive (in terms of pay) than some of its neighbouring authorities, especially during a cost-of-living crisis. The use of "Golden Hellos", will be applied in relation to Senior Planning Officer roles and has been factored into the costings.

8. Net Zero Target

- 8.1. The Climate Impact Assessment Tool has been completed and the recruitment of four posts raises no matters requiring mitigation. The largest impacts associated with recruitment to these roles relates to transport activities (site visits) and these can be mitigated through use of the Council pool cars (electric).

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 9.1. The creation of four additional posts in the DM Service does not give rise to implications in relation equality, diversity and inclusion. Recruitment to the posts will be undertaken in accordance with best practice and the Council's recruitment processes.

10. Community Safety issues

- 10.1. The proposals do not give rise to any Community Safety issues.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With the Local Plan now adopted and an increased caseload of applications being submitted for determination, it is considered necessary to review the resourcing levels within the Development Management Service to ensure they remain appropriate with sufficient resilience to maintain business as usual. With increased planning fee income, there is funding available to resource the four additional posts proposed.

The Recommendation is to

- **APPROVE “Option Three – Managed Growth” as set out in the report across paragraphs 3.14 to 3.30 to deliver a re-structured DM Service as set out at Appendix A Figure 2;**
- **Authorise immediate recruitment to the four new posts**

APPENDIX A

Figure 1 - DM Team Structure (Current)

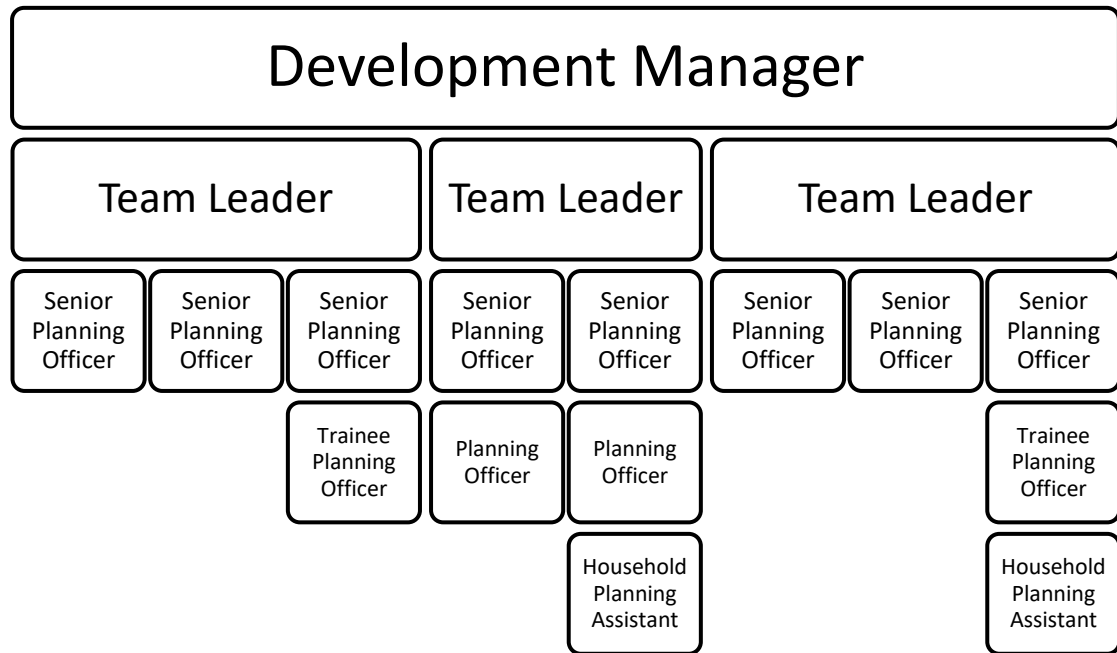
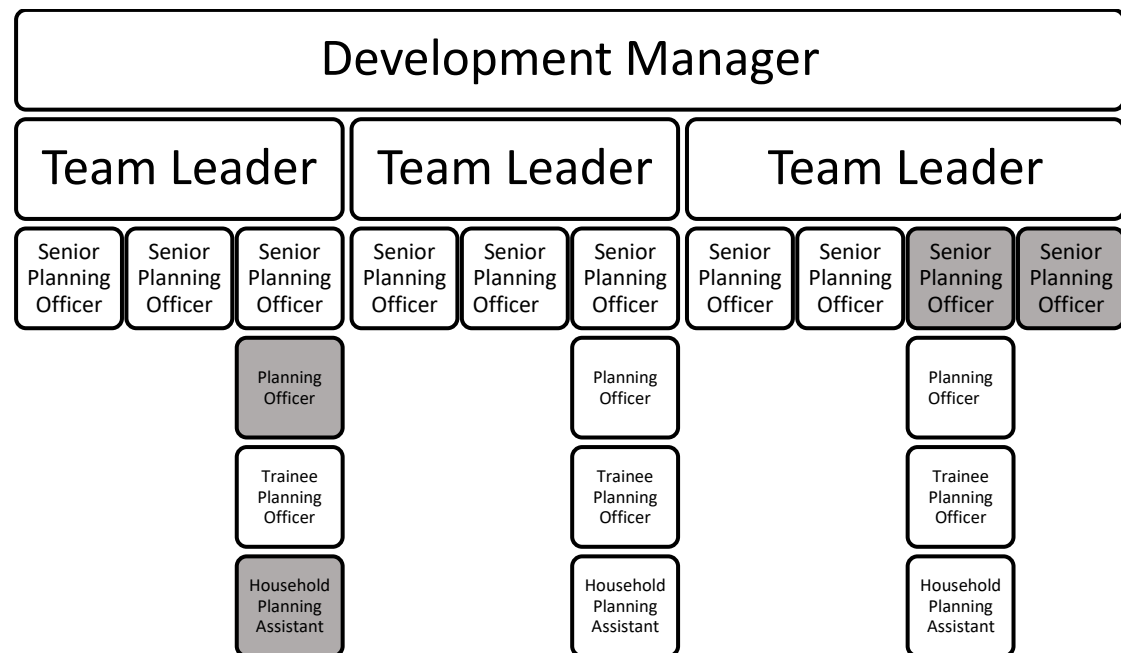


Figure 2 - DM Team Structure (Proposed)



Note: Grey shade denotes new posts to be created

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Planning Policy Resources: Local Plan Review & Senior Landscape (Ecology) Officer	
Executive Summary	<p>In line with the immediate Local Plan Review project proposal agreed by Cabinet on 9 March 2026, in order to meet the 30 month review timeline as detailed by the government, a review of resources identifies that a further two professional Planning Policy Officers will be required to take the project forward. This report also seeks the reinstatement of the Planning Policy Manager role, with the Team Leader role being deleted from the establishment. These will be supported by recently announced MHCLG New System Plan Funding.</p> <p>In addition, with additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain, the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post requires additional hours which will be funded by a new Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fee, now being collected from developers.</p>
Options considered	<p>Option 1 Do Nothing (Not Recommended) Option 2 Re-Assign Staff Across the Wider Planning Service (Not Recommended) Option 3 – Managed Growth through the creation of two new planning policy officer posts (1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer and 1 x Planning Policy Officer), replacing the Team Leader role with a Planning Policy Manager post and strengthening the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) position (Recommended).</p>
Consultation(s)	Corporate Leadership Team including the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, HR Advisor for Planning and Group Accountant.
Recommendations	In order to deliver the Local Plan Review within the 30-month timeframe, to approve Option Three and progress the immediate appointment of: 1 x Planning Policy Manager (removing the Team Leader role from the establishment), 1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer & 1 x Planning Policy Officer as detailed in the report. Also, approve the additional hours for the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post.
Reasons for recommendations	<p>To ensure the Planning Policy team is appropriately resourced in order to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan, to comply with statutory requirements and to maintain appropriate planning policy guidance for the district.</p> <p>Also, to meet the additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain.</p>
Background papers	Local Plan Review – Cabinet paper 9 March 2026. Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) project proposal 28 April 2026.

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Andrew Brown
Contact Officer	Iain Withington, Planning Policy Manager iain.withington@north-norfolk.gov.uk David Glason, Assistant Director for Planning david.glason@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	Delivering and ensuring the Council maintains an up-to-date statutory Local Plan remains a key commitment and component part of the Corporate Plan covering all five themes: Our Greener Future, Developing Our Communities, Meeting Our Housing Need, Investing in Our Local Economy and Infrastructure and A Strong, Responsible & Accountable Council.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	N/A
Council Policies & Strategies	North Norfolk Local Plan Adopted 17 December 2025.

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes. This is a departure decision which would be outside of the agreed base budget for Planning Policy and Conservation Design and Landscape, but can be supported by a recently announced Local Plan review Grant from MHCLG and a new Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fee, now being collected from developers.
Has the public interest test been applied	N/A
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Cabinet endorsed progression of the Local Plan Review 9 March 2026. CLT endorsed the project proposals and increase in staffing 28 April 2026.

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Members and Council endorsement for the recruitment of additional qualified staff resource for the Planning Policy team in order to maintain its current functional requirements and to undertake the required additional work stream in association with Local Plan Review. Also, to consider staffing resource to meet the additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) have advised that North Norfolk District Council is required to bring a new Local Plan forward under the new plan making system. The authority must publish a statutory notice around the intention to commence Local Plan preparation on or before the 30 June 2026 and must commence the 30-month plan preparation period on the 31 October 2026 / Gateway 1 Stage. The process involves significant preparation before these dates with intensive work required upfront around evidence gathering, project management and governance arrangements. A 'Call for Sites', is currently scheduled for June 2026 and a statutory 'Scoping Consultation' inviting feedback on potential content of the Plan. The Scoping Consultation is currently scheduled for w/c 20 July 2026 so as to align with the required timetable giving the Council the best possible chance to align with the mandatory 31 October deadline. This is subject to resource provision as evidence gathering is now front-loaded into the early stages of the plan making system, forming the first phase and informs the subsequent 30 month plan making period. It is recognised that this is a challenging 30-month timetable for delivery. With no Local Plan in place, there is a potential risk of developer challenge through uncontrolled development across the District, especially if not maintaining the 5 Year Housing Land Supply.
- 2.2. Cabinet resolved on the 9 March 2026: 1) To progress the review of the NNDC Local Plan in line with Government expectations and statute requirements. 2) To continue working to inform and influence the future production of a Spatial Development Strategy including engagement and collaborative work through the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework.
- 2.3. A detailed project proposal including initial timelines, budget, governance expectations and project deliverables including expected evidence requirements and minimum staffing resources was endorsed by Corporate Leadership Team on 28 April 2026.
- 2.4. It is recommended that additional officers in the form of one **Senior Planning Policy Officer** and a supporting (but qualified) **Planning Policy Officer** will need to be recruited. The team now needs to be properly resourced to meet the demanding schedule in reviewing the Local Plan which currently comprises of 3.5FTE qualified planning officers, 2.5FTE of which specialise in specific policy areas including policy interpretation and Neighbourhood Planning, while the acting Planning Policy Manager operates across all subjects.
- 2.5. This report also seeks the **reinstatement of the Planning Policy Manager** role to lead the team and deliver the tight programme, with the **Team Leader role being removed from the establishment**. This is deemed to be the appropriate level of resource required to deliver the new Local Plan.
- 2.6. Significant gaps in resource and experience around policy subjects exist which, unless addressed, will manifest and potentially impact on the ability of the Council to meet the expected Local Plan delivery requirements and wider function of the team. It should be noted that the team benefits from an additional project management support officer, 0.5FTE project support and a monitoring officer.
- 2.7. In addition to the further workstream of Local Plan review the team will also work across Norfolk Local Planning Authorities and with statutory organisations to

inform and influence the future production of a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) including further engagement and collaborative work through the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework as well as engaging with Local Government Reorganisation.

- 2.8. It is widely recognised that the Planning system is becoming ever more complex with additional requirements and being subject to numerous legislative changes. This increases pressure on third parties e.g. statutory bodies such as Natural England, Anglian Water, Environment Agency which directly involve the Planning Policy team. The cognitive load now placed on our officers as national front runners with: Local Plan Review and the additional work required to engage with and implement numerous changes in planning legislation as well as the continual emerging updates in national guidance and legislation is the greatest it has ever been.
- 2.9. The **Council is in receipt of £108,474.57 of New System Plan funding**, which forms part of the Governments Plan implementation funding. This funding is provided by MHCLG to support the authority in its commitment to bringing a Local Plan Review forward early in the new plan-making system, to the agreed timelines and milestones¹ helping to ensure good progress is being made. The grant can be spent on activities that support the Plan review and agreed through the grant process namely: preparing or updating the plan evidence base, technical studies, site assessments, consultation or engagement work, hiring additional staff, hiring consultants and training staff.
- 2.10. Whilst it is recommended that this funding is used to support recruitment of additional staff resource, longer term budget provision will have to be provided in future years if the Council are to achieve the agreed and expected timelines and milestones set out above.
- 2.11. It should be noted that cost savings have in the recent past been made with the non-replacement of staff in the team. This was before the Government requirement for an immediate Local Plan review within a 30-month timeframe, hence this review of resources.
- 2.12. In addition, with additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the **Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post** requires additional hours which will be funded by a **new Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fee**, now being collected from developers. **This new income stream will cover the increased hours (increasing the existing 0.4FTE to a Full Time role) and is already being generated.** The BNG Monitoring income forecasts are: 2026/27 £60,000 - £100,000 and 2027/28 £40,000 - £80,000. The future funding requirement relates to an additional 0.6FTE on SCP29-33 which is £30,522.77 to £33,796.28 (including on costs).
- 2.13. This post covers a burgeoning specialist area and enables the Local Planning Authority to fulfil its statutory ecological duties.

¹ Acceptance of this funding is based on your authority's commitment to the following milestones:

Publishing a Notice of Intention to commence Local Plan preparation by 30 June 2026; and Publishing your Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31 October 2026.

- 2.14. The Environment Act 2021 introduced new legislation to bring about BNG – a system designed to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity as part of the planning process. This process became mandatory for major applications on 12 February 2024 and for minor applications on 2 April 2024. All qualifying development captured by BNG is deemed to have been granted subject to a general biodiversity gain condition to secure the biodiversity gain objective.
- 2.15. The general BNG condition is a pre commencement condition: once planning permission has been granted, developers need to submit a Biodiversity Gain Plan which has to be approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development. Where gains on development sites are deemed ‘significant’, they must also be subject to 30 years management and monitoring, with developers being required to submit periodic management/monitoring reports for Local Planning Authority (LPA) sign off. Failure to comply will be an enforcement issue.
- 2.16. To support the delivery of BNG legislation, the Council’s Senior Ecologist has created processes and trained planning officers to undertake evaluation of Small Site Metrics. Business as usual for them also now involves checking the validity of exemptions, providing validation advice and confirming BNG metrics on applications, reviewing planning applications, checking Statutory Metrics (more complex information completed by ecological consultants) and providing guidance to case officers.
- 2.17. Not all applications will provide on-site habitats. Instead, some opt to purchase units from habitat banks. Where, however, on-site habitats are provided, the LPA will be involved in the onward management of the process ensuring developers monitor and submit periodic reports on these sites.
- 2.18. This legislation has brought a new level of complexity to the planning system and requires a deep understanding of habitats in order to assess net gain. It also has had a significant impact on workloads for planning officers who have had to adapt to the new processes and deal with additional work that the Senior Ecologist no longer has time for: e.g. assessing the BNG small site metrics submitted with applications.
- 2.19. To assist with the management of the BNG process the Council purchased software (Exacom) that connects to the planning system (Uniform) to draw down details of planning applications affected by BNG. This software is not being used to its full extent as the monitoring is time consuming and there is insufficient capacity to do this. Consequently, the system is not being ‘managed’ in a way to future proof the compliance with legislation. This also leads to problems for the Planning Enforcement team who monitor progress and secure compliance in association with the ecologists. Without this specialist knowledge consistently being in place, delays in enforcing breaches and dealing with customers will be inevitable.
- 2.20. Agreements to secure monitoring funds are delivered through Section106 or Unilateral Undertakings and the money from this income will be used to fund the increased hours for a Full Time post (currently 0.4FTE). The fee is taken as a one-off payment and secured either prior to planning permission being granted or when the pre-commencement condition is being discharged. These fees also cover costs related to software (i.e. Exacom), mileage for site visits (where necessary) and a standard amount towards enforcement (if required).

- 2.21. In addition to all of the new BNG requirements, the Senior Ecologist also now has a significant role in Nutrient Neutrality (NN), introduced by Natural England in 2022. Again, this work is science and process driven and requires officers to assess Nutrient Calculators and carry out Habitats Regulation Assessments to ensure that developments will not add to the nutrient load on the River Wensum and The Broads. As the competent authority in this area, failure to have proper regard to protecting these habitats may result in decisions being subject to legal challenge or even being quashed.
- 2.22. As with BNG, there are also significant ongoing monitoring and enforcement workstreams generated from Nutrient Neutrality. Hence, on-site mitigation measures need to be secured and delivered, whilst off-site purchased credits need to be recorded to ensure proper compliance with the Habitats Regulations. This requires regular liaison with the Council's Legal and Enforcement teams to help in the drawing up of legal agreements and in ensuring subsequent delivery, all of which takes time previously available for other ecological matters.

3 Proposals and Options

3.1 Option One – Do Nothing (Not Recommended)

3.2 **Officers would be asked to undertake a further and significantly increased workload for an extended period.** Whilst Officers would undoubtedly seek to do their best to manage a notable increase in work this is not sustainable. It would inevitably result in officers being over stretched and productivity detrimentally impacted and long term potentially adversely affecting staff and retention. With the current increased workloads officers are already feeling the pressure and progress has been slower than anticipated.

3.3 This option is not recommended. If this option is chosen, then an immediate review of services undertaken by the planning policy team and its current structure would need to be completed to review resources and the Councils work priorities to align with the workload capacity of the team. This would have financial and reputational implications for the Council in delivering both the statutory Local Plan and the Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality requirements.

3.4 Option Two – Re-Assign Staffing Across the Wider Planning Service (Not Recommended)

3.5 This option seeks to utilise qualified planners not currently within the Planning Policy team to assist with current and future policy workload.

3.6 Existing job descriptions across the wider Department provide resourcing flexibility. What this would mean is that post holders in the Development Management team could be redeployed to roles within the Planning Policy team (and vice versa). There is currently no spare resource and the Development Management service is itself seeking additional resources, reflecting increased workloads.

3.7 Furthermore, planning policy work is of a specialist nature, and it will not be simply the case of redeployment, officers are expected to have significant grounding and experience in the specialist areas across planning policy in order

to maintain expected levels of productivity to deliver the Local Plan Review to the expected timeline and standards.

- 3.8 This would have financial and reputational implications for the Council in delivering both the statutory Local Plan and the Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality requirements.

3.9 Option 3 – Managed Growth (Recommended)

- 3.10 This option would see the creation of:

- 1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer (1 FTE)
- 1 x Planning Policy Officer (1 FTE)
- Replacing the Team Leader role with a Planning Policy Manager post
- Strengthening the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) position from 0.4FTE to 1FTE

- 3.11 This option would see the creation of two full time and permanent posts. Recruitment into one Senior Planning Policy Officer post will help bring experience and broaden the subject and specialist knowledge required across the team, while a Planning Officer post will provide officer support and increase capacity and resilience across the team.

- 3.12 As covered in paragraph 2.9, the **Council is in receipt of £108,474.57 of New System Plan funding from MHCLG**, which forms part of the Governments Plan implementation funding. It is recommended that this funds the Planning Policy Officer roles in the short term.

- 3.13 As covered in paragraph 2.12, with additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain, the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post requires additional hours which will be **wholly funded by a new Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fee**, now being collected from developers.

4 Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Having an adequately resourced Planning Policy team helps the Council to meet all of its Corporate Plan Objectives.

- 4.2 **Our Greener Future** – Ensuring that Officers help protect and enhance the special landscape and ecological value of North Norfolk whilst improving the biodiversity of the district. Strengthening the ability for local communities to deliver on local environmental ambitions and priorities.

- 4.3 **Developing Our Communities** – Through delivery of the statutory Local Plan to guide the future development of the District.

- 4.4 **Meeting our Housing Need** – allocating sites within the Local Plan and delivery of a suite of strategic housing matters. Monitoring of the housing land supply and housing delivery monitoring.

- 4.5 Investing In Our Local Economy & Infrastructure** – undertaking employment land reviews and allocating employment sites in the Local Plan. Working with the Economic Development team to help secure inward investment and to help businesses navigate the planning system in a timely manner. Liaison with key statutory organisations to deliver key infrastructure for strategic developments.

5 Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 Preferred Option 3 – Managed Growth will result in an increase to the base budget as set out below.

Proposed Role	Cost per annum
1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer	£57,807 per annum Funded by New System Plan funding in short term
1 x Planning Policy Officer	£50,154 per annum Funded by New System Plan funding in short term
Replacing Team Leader role with Planning Policy Manager post	£9,732 per annum (difference)
Strengthening the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) position from 0.4FTE to 1FTE	£32,187 (difference) Funded by BNG monitoring fees
Total 2026/27	£149,880 per annum

- 5.2 As covered in paragraph 2.9, the **Council is in receipt of £108,474.57 of New System Plan funding from MHCLG**, which forms part of the Governments Plan implementation funding. It is recommended that this funds the Planning Policy Officer roles in the short term. However, growth in the Planning Policy base budget will be required in the medium term.
- 5.3 As covered in paragraph 2.12, with additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain, the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post requires additional hours which will be **wholly funded by a new Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fee**, now being collected from developers. This covers the entirety of the £32,187 cost per annum in the table above.
- 5.4 The production of the last Local Plan cost in the region of approx. £540,000, (excluding staff costs), however this took approximately 9 years. Although much of the evidence base is still required, the process has been streamlined with the expectation of Government that once Gateway 1 is reached the project will be completed within 30 months. Evidence however needs to be proportionate, and it is not expected that all of the adopted evidence base will need to be updated. The new process is however concentrated and will be more staff intensive.
- 5.5 The budget for future Local Plan Review has been funded since 2018/19 by £50,000 increments each year from the Council's planning reserve. This balance, as of 1st April 2026 is £302,433 for the project. The available in-house budget projected to support the Local Plan Review project over the 30 months is

£452,433 (by 1st April 2029) excluding staffing costs but including the continued annual increments from the planning reserve for the next three years.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The accelerated timetable for renewing the local plan has created a need for establishment growth in Planning Policy of two new roles. New Burdens funding of £108k will support the first year with the Earmarked Planning Reserve (EMR) funding the final year of the Council. The EMR will also fund the incremental cost of re-instating the Planning Policy Manager.

The Senior Landscape Officer establishment growth of 0.6 FTE will need to be offset by Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) fee income. Should that revenue income prove insufficient, it is recommended that any spare capacity be offered to neighbouring Councils that will be superseded by the East Norfolk unitary council.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Progressing with Option Three does not give rise to significant legal implications.
- 6.2 A failure to fully resource the team appropriately will impact the Council’s ability to meet its statutory and legal requirements for Local Plan Review.

The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section.

The report is before Full Council as it recommends an increase in headcount (establishment). However, it is not anticipated that there will be a significant financial strain.

7 Risks

Risks	Risk detail	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Proximity 1-5
<p><i>What are the initial risks associated with this project?</i></p> <p>Impact: what impact will it have on the project? 5 = catastrophic 1 = negligible</p> <p>Likelihood: how</p>	Plan not completed within the mandatory 30-month timetable - may trigger Secretary of State intervention, loss of control and reputational impact.	4	4-5 (less so if sufficient resources are allocated)	2
	Challenging 30-month timetable for delivery. With no Local Plan in place, potential risk of developer challenge through uncontrolled development across the District if not maintaining the 5 Year Housing Land Supply.	4	4-5 (less so if sufficient resources are allocated)	3

<p><i>likely is this to happen?</i> 5 = very high 1 = very low</p> <p>Proximity: when may this risk occur? 5 = within 6 months 1 = over 15 years</p>	Insufficient progress in the 'getting ready phase' (Gateway 1) - compresses all later stages and increases risk of failure.	5	3	5																								
	Evidence delays due to third party consultants (Gateway 2)	4	2-3	4																								
	Evidence not robust enough to satisfy examiners - leading to Gateway 2/3 failure or examination delays.	4	3	2																								
	National Policy or Guidance changes.	2	2	2																								
	Gateway 2 & 3 failure (for various reasons – dependent on emerging strategy) - with requirement to repeat gateway stages.	4	3	3																								
	Examination pause due to issues emerging too late (e.g. evidence flaws) - leading to timetable delay which is hard to recover from.	4	2	2																								
	Insufficient engagement with/from stakeholders - statutory bodies may object at Gateway stages.	4	2	2																								
	Insufficient capacity to meet growth requirements	5	3	2																								
	Digital planning requirements not met.	3	3	2																								
	Insufficient capacity/staff resource.	5	5	4																								
	LGR / Devolution – impact of reforms and requirements around production of a Spatial Development Strategy (e.g. requirement to align the Local Plan with a higher order strategy).	3	3	3																								
Risk criteria	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Score</th> <th>Impact*</th> <th>Likelihood</th> <th>Timeframe</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Catastrophic</td> <td>Very High</td> <td>Within 6 months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Critical</td> <td>High</td> <td>Within 12 months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Moderate</td> <td>Moderate</td> <td>Within 2 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Marginal</td> <td>Low</td> <td>>2 but <15 years</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Negligible</td> <td>Very Low</td> <td>> 15 years</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Score	Impact*	Likelihood	Timeframe	5	Catastrophic	Very High	Within 6 months	4	Critical	High	Within 12 months	3	Moderate	Moderate	Within 2 years	2	Marginal	Low	>2 but <15 years	1	Negligible	Very Low	> 15 years			
Score	Impact*	Likelihood	Timeframe																									
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4	Critical	High	Within 12 months																									
3	Moderate	Moderate	Within 2 years																									
2	Marginal	Low	>2 but <15 years																									
1	Negligible	Very Low	> 15 years																									
If you are unsure on any aspect speak to the SRO																												
If you wish to include any additional, supporting information, please do so here.	<p>The Government requires the authority to start the new plan-making process, instructing the Council to publish a notice of intention to commence plan-making on 30th June 2026, and to pass Gateway 1 Self-Assessment of readiness to undertake plan-making by 31st October 2026. This is because the newly adopted North Norfolk Local Plan 2024-40 has a housing requirement below 80% of the new national standard housing methodology.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system/rollout-of-the-new-local-plan-making-system</p> <p>Undertaking a Plan Review at this time is not without risk, not least because some capacity and expertise of the Planning Policy Team has been lost in the recent past as an immediate Local Plan Review was not envisaged and current demands placed on the service means that it is already operating at capacity.</p>																											

The Government has introduced an entirely new plan-making system with significant new and emerging legislation and guidance (**much of which is still emerging**). Therefore, the process is being undertaken on an iterative basis.

The Council will be one of the few front runners and as delivery depends on strong collaboration and also resource and capacity of third parties especially those of the statutory bodies to respond at the appropriate time

The process requires the commissioning of a range of evidence from the very beginning of the project and includes staged reviews (Gateway Assessments) which will by their nature be designed to flag issues early in the process and assist with risk management. Strong project, time and resource management is essential from the start.

Risks remain around the capacity/availability of statutory consultees to engage effectively with the Council. This is amplified by the fact that all Norfolk LPAs are on a similar plan-review timeline.

Mitigating Actions

Strong project management, including detailed project plan
Appropriate governance arrangements
Timely staff recruitment and retention
Engagement Plan

Insufficient capacity to meet housing growth requirements

- Undertaking an early Call for Sites
- Working with Norfolk LPAs on Housing Capacity including developing a shared evidence base and collective Site Assessment Methodology.

Digital planning

- Effective scoping and understanding of requirements, and procurement of required resource and alignment with the principles of 'digital first'.

Partnership working

- To ensure effective and timely responses and engagement from other NNDC service areas
- To work with Norfolk Strategic Planning Officers Group on joint approaches and commissioning of joint-evidence where possible.

Workload prioritisation

- Dedicated team focus on plan review and deferral/re-assignment of existing or new workloads where required.

8 Net Zero Target

- 8.1 No assessment has been made against the Council's Net Zero 2030 Strategy & Climate Action Plan, but the sustainable future development of the District is embedded throughout the creation of the Local Plan.

9 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 9.1 The creation of additional posts does not give rise to implications in relation equality, diversity and inclusion. Recruitment to the posts will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's recruitment processes.

10 Community Safety issues

10.1 The proposals do not give rise to any Community Safety issues

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

In line with the immediate Local Plan Review project proposal agreed by Cabinet on 9 March 2026, in order to meet the 30 month review timeline as detailed by the government, a review of resources identifies that a further two professional Planning Policy Officers will be required to take the project forward together with the reinstatement of the Planning Policy Manager role (with the Team Leader role being deleted from the establishment. These will be necessary to deliver the Local Plan Review and are supported by recently announced MHCLG New System Plan Funding.

In addition, with additional responsibilities imposed upon the Council as the Local Planning Authority through Nutrient Neutrality & Biodiversity Net Gain, the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post requires additional hours which will be funded by a new Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring fee, now being collected from developers.

The Recommendation is to:

APPROVE 'Option Three - Managed Growth' as set out in the report and progress the immediate appointment of: 1 x Planning Policy Manager (removing the Team Leader role from the establishment), 1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer & 1 x Planning Policy Officer as detailed in the report. Also, approve the additional hours for the Senior Landscape Officer (Ecology) post.