OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 10 June 2026 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

Committee Members Present:	Cllr V Holliday (Chairman)	Cllr M Gray (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr S Penfold	Cllr C Cushing
	Cllr M Hankins	Cllr P Heinrich
	Cllr K Bayes	Cllr K Leith
	Cllr T Adams	Cllr L Shires
	Cllr A Brown	Cllr N Dixon
	Boyle	

Members also attending:

Officers in Attendance:

Also in attendance:

31 SUBSTITUTES

None.

32 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None.

33 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd April were proposed by Cllr Heinrich and seconded by Cllr Cushing to be approved as a correct record barring the following minor amendment.

Pg.2 The word manger be replaced with manager.

The Chair also queried if the Committee had seen the deprivation data and GIS. The DSGO confirmed the deprivation data had been circulated but would check that included the GIS.

34 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

36 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

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

None received.

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

None received.

39 REPORTING PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27 ACTION PLAN- TO END OF Q4

Cllr Adams introduced the report providing an overview of key items.

The climate emergency rating of green was a concern to Cllr Cushing as it appeared very high on the risk register and yet this report did not appear to reflect that risk. Cllr Adams explained the risk register was looking at a period in the past but agreed they could consider reviewing in the future. Cllr Adams went on to say that in providing vital services, such as purchasing new temporary accommodation for the homeless in the area, it had inevitably increased the council’s carbon emissions. Additionally meeting future challenges, such as the collection of food waste, and the increase in the authority’s property portfolio with such things as the new Fakenham leisure centre, also had a significant impact on carbon emissions. This meant balancing services and provision with the target of being net-zero. The Chair felt that the risk register and performance report needed to be in line with one another.

Cllr Penfold suggested, in connection with the Rural Position Statement (RPS), the Cabinet could consider including churches, as very often they provided services beyond worship, and were critical for many communities and acted like a hub. Going forward, Cllr Adams agreed, that any emerging unitary authority needed to be aware of the challenges ahead with the decline of the rural post office and the necessity for banking hubs etc. and churches had an important part to play in their communities.

When Cllr Hankins queried when they would be able to see an updated RPS, Cllr Adams explained that due to staff capacity they had not been able to analyse the data sufficiently so could not give a date as to when that would be available to view. He assured the committee they were talking about it at a corporate leadership level, and it would need to be in place before any new emerging authority was formed.

Cllr Adams welcomed the progress that was being made by local town and parish councils in developing their Neighbourhood Plans given the additional demands put on local authorities by central government who seemed to undervalue that work.

In response to a question by Cllr Cushing, the Leader was confident in reaching the Council’s target for affordable homes with there being significant demand for them on the housing list. Cllr Adams felt the Committee may wish to contemplate the suggestion made by the Chair at the possibility of looking at the net gain of affordable housing, as there was considerable loss of affordable housing, and any possibility to net that off against the new acquisitions could add clarity.

The leader updated the committee, at the request of the Chair, on developments at Benjamin Court and Bacton Energy Hub and would keep the committee updated when anything more substantial was agreed.

Cllr Adams agreed the Chair was right to highlight service reviews, as the authority went through Local Government Reform (LGR), and they had discussed the issue at Business Planning noting they would need additional staff to see them through that period of change. The rating might be under some strain as a result, but it was his intention to allow staff to be in the best position possible as they transitioned into a new authority.

In response to a query from the Chair on next year's Action Plan, Cllr Adams, admitted everything needed an outcome eventually but the space to be able to target those would become less as they got closer to the emergence of a new authority.

The possibility of seeking heritage funding, to support the refurbishment of the auditorium of Cromer Pier was discussed, at the suggestion of Cllr Penfold, as it may be more productive than seeking National Lottery funding. The Committee agreed to allow Cllr Penfold to make some enquiries with the County Museum Service.

Cllr Cushing said that he felt that an issue that arose during the recent meeting of the Governance, Risk & Audit Committee should be included in this year's annual action plan. He said that recent audits by the Council's external auditor's (EA) had been 'disclaimed' or not signed off and last year the EA had blamed NNDC for not providing the required documents in a timely manner. GRAC had been very keen to ensure that this year's audit should achieve a qualified opinion, and the Chair of the Committee was putting actions in place to monitor this. Cllr Cushing went onto say that the Council spent approximately £200k on the audit and it was crucial that the Council's finances were closely managed ahead of LGR. He therefore suggested that the following addition should be added to the action plan – 'that the Council should achieve a qualified audit opinion in the current financial year'.

Cllr Gray was concerned this could be seen as setting the Council up to fail and that this work sat with the Governance, Risk and Audit Committee (GRAC). Cllr Shires and the DFR confirmed that was already monitoring this progress, and that they were due to meet with the GRAC Chair shortly to discuss the matter. The DSGM advised that GRAC and Overview and Scrutiny Committee both had oversight functions and she said that she would look at the terms of reference for each committee to assess where the responsibility for any actions or recommendations should sit and then meet with the DFR to discuss the most appropriate way forward. She would update the Chair on the outcome of the above.

Cllr Bayes asked if more information in apprenticeships could be included in the Action Plan, but Cllr Adams explained NNDC was not the lead authority.

- Overview and Scrutiny noted the contents of the report and provided comments to the Cabinet on any items they felt appropriate.

RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet:

- For Cabinet to contact local Diocese for information on what, non-faith, services and community projects they provide in the local area.

Action:

- Cllr Penfold to talk to County Museum Service for guidance in putting in an application for heritage funding and to inform strategic process.

40 ANGLIAN WATER

Grant Tuffs, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Lead (SPPAL) from Anglian Water (AW) updated the committee on key issues raised by members since their last visit, including storm overflow data and details on investment into their assets.

With the rise in summer temperatures, AW thanked the council after an amber heat health alert was announced and their communications team had assisted in getting that message across to residents. There had been a national water efficiency campaign and a local campaign called ‘Small Changes, Big Difference’ by AW to help preserve water resource at times of such high demand.

The SPPAL also brought to the committee’s attention AW Thriving Communities Fund, which was again open to applications for local projects, amongst other things, looking to support water sustainability and the environment. The SPPAL promised to send members details of how to apply.

Hannah Wilson, the AW Planning Manager (PM), outlined what their strategic site process entailed and what the criteria was for them to comment on new major planning applications. AW had worked closely with The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MCHLG) and the Environment Agency (EA) on this approach, and they would need the necessary investment to deliver their promise to deliver the infrastructure needed. DEFRA and AW had sent a guide to developers and planning authorities outlining the agreed approach.

AW said, in relation to many critical medium and smaller developments, they were actively working to enable that growth whilst protecting their customers and the environment.

In response to a concern raised by the Chair, the PM advised AW would object to all applications where there was no Water Recycling Centre (WRC) capacity and overcoming issues at WRC was a long-term project. Answering Cllr Leith’s question, AW acknowledged where developers used their absolute right to connect was a cause for concern.

Cllr Hankins expressed some concern that temporary services might be installed during development, however the PM said they would not be adopted by AW.

Cllr Dixon felt that until Members visited a WRC they could not fully understand the scale, or cause, of the problem. Investment was not the sole answer, but they needed to identify and confront the underlying cause. He asked for NNDC to fully engage with the issue of foul and surface water as many applications were approved even when AW had objected. He asked that a stronger working relationship was forged between the NNDC planning team and the AW pre-planning department to ensure a greater weight was added to any objections raised.

Cllr Dixon requested the Committee adopt a recommendation that Members visit water recycling centres, and that the Committee look at the Strategic Flood Alliance at the County Council and the Norfolk Lead Local Flood Authority.

The PM explained that AW were not a statutory consultee but there could be an opportunity in future regulatory changes to be added.

In follow-up to a query by Cllr Gray, it was noted by Cllr Shires that the current method for Members to raise local water issues to AW was not working as many emails were not acknowledged or replied to until many weeks later. AW assured the committee this would be fed back to their relevant team, but they always endeavoured to respond as quickly as possible.

Cllr Brown challenged AW on the inadequate infrastructure that was delaying as many as 14.5k properties, in an area AW cover, from being built and if there were any allocated sites within the district's local plan that were a cause for concern. The PM explained it was based on how OFWAT calculated their investment for growth. AW were pushing for it to be based on figures from local planning authorities.

AW admitted they could not keep objecting to planning applications and must get their infrastructure up to standard and they were slowly working towards a position where this was possible. They explained that growth investment in WRC came from customers. Developers' contributions came through an infrastructure charge that was shared across the region and solely reinvested to improve the foul drainage network.

The committee were assured by AW, after a query from Cllr Penfold, that, although it was dependent on dry or wet summers, resulting in spills potentially peaking at times, overall, they were going down. They were making a £1bn investment, through the storm overflow reduction plan to tackle the issues and to reduce to fewer than 10 per year. Cllr Gray felt customers paid a lot of money to know what was going on and that data should be simplified so everyone could have insight into that data quickly and in a format they understood. AW confirmed they have a live map on their website showing spill data, which they were legally obliged to do, but would take any comments onboard as always open for ways to improve the service.

The PM reassured Cllr Heinrich, when he said residents were rightly concerned about surface water and storm overflows across much of North Norfolk. AW said they were reliant on planning case officers to raise those concerns with them so they could object, and they would take into consideration where residents had suffered previous issues with flooding etc. to help inform their recommendation. The PM agreed to share the criteria for assessing planning applications near existing known flooding hotspots.

Cllr Heinrich also pointed out that many water towers were extremely old and not designed to cope with the level of demand that was expected of them. AW explained they did work with their water resource management team to understand what the requirement was for the long term. They went on to say that there was a requirement for long term market wide knowledge for water and wastewater and they would utilise planning to support new developments in asking for phasing conditions, allowing them to view new developments in isolation and then at their cumulative impact on the entire water network. The PM said they'd signed up to a scheme called Water Use Standard with the Environment Agency (EA), Natural England and other water companies to educate customers to keep water use down to an economical level.

The SPPAL said that infrastructure projects can take a long time to deliver alongside proposed introduction of water efficiency ratings, as with energy products on white goods etc. and the implementation of smart meters. AW confirmed they would be lobbying government to enforce rainwater harvesting as part of new developments.

The PM explained that their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) acted like a matrix of current performance as well as growth intelligence of the local plans that were coming forward. They used the DWMP to help inform them of the flows and that data informed them what the future looked like so they could best focus and model their forthcoming work to meet those requirements, whether they be growth or environmental. The DWMP was going through a consultation of the new plan with webinars being offered to all interested parties.

In response to a query from Cllr Bayes, the PM explained that if a development goes ahead when AW had objected due to incapacity and infrastructure it put them in a reactive situation where they don't have that investment planned and no money put aside to be able to meet those demands. It subsequently put them at a higher risk of the EA enforcing against them when there were additional spills, and meant they might have to look at less favourable solutions such as tankering flows from the site.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend all Members to have an opportunity to visit a Water Recycling Centre, at Anglian Water discretion, to better inform Members of the working process and the impact on the region.

Action:

- To consult with the Planning Team at NNDC on how it currently consults with Anglian Water Pre-Planning Team to determine what weight is added by those objections and concerns raised by AW

- Provide an overview of the criteria for assessing planning applications near existing known flooding hotspots

- Share the consultation plan for their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP)

41 NHOSC REPORT

The Committee noted the report but made no comments.

42 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

No comments

43 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The DSGO gave an update on recent answers received in response to the O&S Action Tracker and outlined the Committee work programme. The Committee discussed considering broadband as part of the mobile connectivity item but **agreed** that although this was just as important for local people and businesses it was a whole new work stream to emergency mobile phone signal.

Action:

- Committee asked that the item around the Net Zero strategy be added back into the work programme.

The Committee agreed that Cllr Gray should liaise with the council Communications Team on a public survey for the Mobile Connectivity item to help inform them on their next action.

44 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.

Chairman