

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

24th July 2024

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BROWN - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

For the period 18th March 2024 to 12th July 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

Since the last Portfolio Holder report to Council, we have had three sessions that build on our Planning Service Improvement Plan (PSIP) commitment to better and wider engagement:

- (i) On 30th January we held our quarterly **Agents and Developers Forum**. I was pleased that about 30 people were at the virtual meeting - and that the number of people attending each session is on an upward trajectory;
- (ii) We have held two more **Town and Parish Council Planning Briefing Sessions** in Cromer on 26th March and North Walsham on 22nd May. The next (our 6th such) session is due to take place in Fakenham on 18th July 2024). We have now had well over 100 people attend one (or more) sessions.
- (iii) **A briefing open to all Councillors** on Nutrient Neutrality on 23rd May 2024 – the experiences and feedback from which has helped tailor a Councillor Training for Planning which is being reported to Development Committee on 25th July 2024.

I also expect a number of further PSIP matters to be reported to Committee prior to the September Council meeting.

In terms of Planning Policy:

- (iv) The scheduled hearing sessions on the **Local Plan Examination** finished in March 2024. We understood we were about to hear news from the Inspector on 'what next' when the General Election was called. The Inspector wrote to us on 24th May and advised:

"I am sorry to have to advise my understanding that the post hearings letter will not now be released until after the general election. The timing is most unfortunate as the letter is effectively ready but I am afraid the delay is unavoidable in the circumstances."

At the time of writing this Report, we continue to wait for his letter. For up-to-date information see: [Local Plan Examination Latest News](#).

- (v) The Wells-next-the-Sea **Neighbourhood Plan** referendum took place on 4th July 2024. 82.4% of voters in the referenda voted in favour of the Plan -on a record turnout on such Plans of 58%. The formal process associated with ‘making’ the Plan for it to become part of the Development Plan is now underway. For more information see: [Wells-next-the-Sea Neighbourhood Plan](#). Since the last Report, Hoveton Parish Council and North Walsham Town Council have both applied to be designed for the purposes of Neighbourhood Planning – effectively the first formal step in the Plan making process.
- (vi) The next – and potentially final - version of the **North Walsham West Development Brief** is due to be considered at the Council’s Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working party meeting on 18th July 2024 – and then – if agreed – Cabinet thereafter. The Brief can be accessed at [NW West - Development Brief](#).

In terms of Development Management:

- (vii) The **Development Committee** has met six times the last Report – including three meetings in May. The April meeting generated some widespread media interest due to it featuring the latest application (which was supported) for Arcady in Cley-Next-The-Sea (for more information see: [Development Committee Report - Arcady - PF/24/0101](#)). In housing numbers terms, the largest application considered was for 47 affordable dwellings at Bacton (which was supported) (for more information see: [Development Committee - Bacton - PF/23/1612](#)).
- (viii) Development Committee considered a **Performance Report** at its’ meeting on 30th May 2024 – see [DC Performance May 2024](#). This demonstrated the excellent service being provided both in terms of speed of decision and success at appeal.

Government Led Changes to Planning:

- (ix) Clearly the **new Government** has given strong indications that ‘Planning’ especially as it relates to new homes – is likely to be a core area of focus. As an example the new Chancellor announced in her first major speech that:
1. *The government will consult on a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in the next three weeks.*
 2. *The new Housing Secretary will tell local authorities to get their local plans up to date and review their green belt boundaries.*
 3. *Local mayors will be asked to tell the new Housing Secretary and the Chancellor about any investment opportunities “with important planning considerations”*
 4. *The Secretary of State has already recovered appeals for two data centres.*
 5. *The Secretary of State will intervene more actively in planning proposals that are likely to generate significant economic growth*
 6. *The “de facto “ban” on onshore wind has ended as planning rules eased.*
 7. *Energy projects will be given planning “priority”.*
 8. *The government will develop a spatial plan for all infrastructure projects.*

9. *The transport and energy secretaries will prioritise decisions on “unresolved” infrastructure projects.*
10. *National policy statements for “critical infrastructure” will be updated “within the year”.*
11. *A new government taskforce will “accelerate stalled housing sites”.*
12. *The government will fund 300 new planning officer roles.*

Source: Planning Resource Website: [12 things you need to know about the chancellor’s latest planning announcements](#)

In terms of Building Control:

- (x) The legal requirement to prove competence and be validated and licenced as a ‘Registered Building Inspector’ has now come into force after a brief 3 month extension of time. NNDC has over 85% of its staff registered at the necessary levels, with every effort to get the remaining surveyor through as soon as possible. Whilst disappointing to not be 100% there by the deadline, NNDC compare favourably with most other Local Authorities and Registered Building Control Approvers.

Appropriate supervision is required for staff that are not validated, and the Local Authority has a duty to provide supervision, appropriate policies are being drafted to cover this.

All surveyors are signed up to a training program to ensure continuing professional development is suitably recorded to provide evidence to the Building Safety Regulator.

Workload and income appears to be increasing again following a slight lull in the last financial year.

Quarterly reporting of KPI’s to the Building Safety Regulator is now being undertaken, with the first 3 month period being the first quarter of this financial year

The latest legislation has provided more ‘enforcement’ powers, which NNDC has recently utilised to successfully require a developer to undertake necessary remedial works to satisfy fire safety requirements.

Further legislation changes are due in the next few months, ranging from changes to Fire Safety under Part B, and new legislation on Toilet accommodation requirements under Part T.

Other matters of potential interest:

- (xi) The £9.6m ***Nutrient Neutrality*** Mitigation Fund (see: [Norfolk Mitigation Fund](#)) that was set up covering affected areas of Norfolk (including North Norfolk District Council) was launched on 16th May at Broadlands Business Park. The first round of bidding to that Fund has concluded and decisions on it should be made shortly. Whilst Broadland District Council will be the formal decision makers on the use of the money, various mechanisms are being put in place to ensure other areas – including ours – are properly involved. The Assistant Director – Planning is involved in this work on behalf the Council.

The outcome of a second round bid to a further national bidding process (which Norfolk Councils bid into collectively with our encouragement) appears to have got caught up by the General Election.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

The next (and sixth) Town and Parish Council Planning roadshow will be held in Fakenham on 18th July 2024. Thereafter we are going to do an online one in September prior to reviewing the focus of the sessions and – potentially – switching to more topic based sessions (e.g. ‘producing a Neighbourhood Plan’ or ‘writing a representation letter on a planning application’).

The next Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party is due to be held on 18th July 2024.

The next Development Committee is due to be held on 25th July 2024.

3 Meetings attended

April

4. Dev Comm
11 Chairman's Civic reception
15 Cabinet and Business Planning
17 Overview and Scrutiny
23 Nutrient Neutrality Mitigation Fund
29 Business Planning

May

8 Overview and Scrutiny
9 Dev Comm
9 Portfolio Holder Meeting
13 Cabinet and Business Planning
15 Full Council
16 Development Committee
16 Nutrient Mitigation Fund launch
23 Nutrient Neutrality briefing
30 Dev Comm

June

No meetings

July

8 Cabinet and Business Planning
11 Portfolio Holder meeting

4 Future Meetings

July

24 Full Council
25 Dev Comm
29 Business Planning
30 Peer Review

August

8 Portfolio Holder meeting
22 Dev Comm