

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

NOVEMBER 2024

COUNCILLOR ADAMS - CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGY, COUNTRYWIDE WORKING AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS, PERFORMANCE, COMMUNICATIONS, HR AND LEGAL SERVICES

For the period September 2024 to November 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

Legal

Coastwise

- The new Climate Change and Coastal Erosion Transition Lawyer started in post in September and has been providing direct support to the Coastwise team identifying legislation, policy and case law to ascertain how councils can best transition homes, businesses and infrastructure away from the coast, to eventually feed back to the Environment Agency and DEFRA with proposals for policy and legislative change.
- In addition, they have been advising Coastwise in relation to NNDC's potential liabilities and all types of contracts relating to the project, which have so far included drafting T&Cs for an art competition, negotiating consultancy agreements, advising on IP rights, and, significantly, drafting and bringing to completion a first of a kind agreement for the purchase of a 'planning replacement opportunity' from a member of the public whose home is at risk of coastal erosion.

Freedom of Information

- FOI/DPA request figures show that the Council's current performance to responding to requests within the statutory twenty working days is at 98% and has not dipped below 95% thus far in 2024/25.

Litigation

- Focus remains on recovery of larger and longstanding debts at this time in conjunction, particularly, with the revenues and benefits team.
- Recovery of £29,000 of a £50,000 debt, with agreed installments of a further £4,000 per month until April 2025 which will see recovery of the full debt.
- The Council have instigated a winding up petition in the high court against a single creditor in relation to outstanding council debts of £44,694.50.
- This is over and above multiple charging orders which secure outstanding debts.

Property matters

- Eastlaw completed on another house purchase to be used as temporary accommodation.

ACV matters

- Eastlaw have considered a number of Assets of Community Value (ACV) listings (either at first instance or upon review), with the following deemed successful: Hunny Bell, Hunworth

Planning matters

- NNDC appears to be leading the way in trying to mitigate the impact of the “nutrient neutrality” regulations by preparing and using section 106 agreements, signed by owners of houses, who agree to the upgrading of their septic tanks which in turn releases new housing in areas affected by the “nutrient neutrality” regulations. In October alone Eastlaw have completed 11 section 106 agreements to enable the release of 31 new build dwellings in the District.
- Eastlaw also drafted and completed a section 106 planning agreement with the National Trust in a record two weeks to enable the expedited construction of a pedestrian bridge at Cabbage Creek, Stiffkey.

Code of Conduct matters

- Most matters have not warranted investigation, with words of advice being provided as part of the initial assessment process.
- There is one matter which is currently under investigation and may progress to a hearing before the Standards Committee.

Democratic Services

- The team is struggling with resource issues. Members have been updated in this regard, and efforts are being made to address this.

Elections

- The Elections team are still running the Annual Canvass and are currently processing returned reminder forms and completing other canvass checking ahead of publishing the Revised Register in December.
- The Periodic Polling place review is also continuing and a report will be presented to Full Council shortly with only a handful of changes in official designation being proposed.

HR

- A Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy has been introduced in line with the change to legislation effective from 26 October 2024, training is currently being sourced and will be rolled out to all officers and members.
- We are working with the Comms Team to produce a final draft of both the People Strategy and the Learning and Development Strategy.
- HR and the Comms Team have been working to support the LGA National Recruitment Campaign which launched on 4 November utilising space within the Outlook Magazine.

Comms

- Consultation has formed an important element of recent work for the Communications Team, with the following consultations/engagements launched to the public via Council channels in recent weeks:
 - Local Validation
 - Local Plan

- Council Tax benefit changes
- Anti-social vehicle meetings PSPO
- Work is underway to present further public consultation opportunities around the Council's budget proposals for next year, North Lodge Park and leisure events/services provided or supported by the Council in North Norfolk.
- In addition, the team have communicated proactively and reactively around potential car park charge changes, discretionary toilet provision and beach hut management. All of these have been appropriately contextualised against transparent and regular updates regarding the Council's wider financial challenges - and the on-going process to identify savings and revenue opportunities to meet those challenges.
- Positive news has also recently been shared for our residents following the Government's recent budget, including confirmation of funding for the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub and NNDC's pending share of an £8.8m Nutrient Neutrality Mitigation Fund payment for partnering authorities in Norfolk. It is hoped the latter will help to 'unblock' pending and future North Norfolk housing development proposals where Nutrient Neutrality legislation has presented extra challenge and potential delays.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Elections

- Before the Christmas break, initial planning tasks will be completed in respect of the 1st May 2025 Norfolk County Council Elections.

3 Meetings attended

Meetings attended:

- Norfolk Business Board
- National Gas
- Meetings in respect of West Runton and Weybourne Public toilets – various
- Broads Authority
- Cabinet/Business Planning - various
- Overview & Scrutiny
- Council Tax Support Working Party
- Benjamin Court Public Meeting
- Norfolk Leaders Group
- Transport East
- Various other internal meetings

Attended:

- NNDC 50th Birthday Celebration event

Upcoming & to occur:

- JSCC
- Transport East
- Bishop of Lynn
- Albert Bartlett Ltd
- VNN Conference
- Coastwise drop in events

- Cash Access UK meetings

Media:

- EDP
- Look East
- That's Tv
- BBC Norfolk Radio
- Student Journalists