

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

February 2025

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

For the period December 2024 to February 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Legal

Freedom of Information

- The Council continues to meet its target in terms of response times at or above 95% for the year. The team are currently looking to publish our performance rates on the Council's website.

Litigation

- Focus remains on recovery of larger and longstanding debts at this time in conjunction, particularly, with the revenues and benefits team.
- 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 and are commencing further insolvency proceedings against another individual who owes circa £60,000 to the Council.
- This is over and above multiple charging orders which secure outstanding debts.
- Eastlaw successfully prosecuted an individual for planning offences at the beginning of the year and are in Court later in the month for a further prosecution for offences relating to failure to provide information to the Council necessary for the recovery of further significant debt.

Coastwise

- The Coastal Transition Lawyer continues to provide support to the Coastwise team, including negotiation of consultancy agreement with the Environment Agency, provision of advice on cliffed coasts and dangerous structures on cliff tops, limitation of liabilities and indemnity forms, terms of the early access to national coastal erosion risk data, has fed back to the Law Society and National Trading Standards in respect of estate agents duties in relation to coastal erosion, and is in the process of feeding back to UKELA working party in relation to apparent disconnect between legislation and policy which is hindering delivery of more natural coastal management and transition from at risk areas.

Code of Conduct matters

- Most matters have not warranted investigation, with words of advice being provided as part of the initial assessment process.
- One matter was recently dealt with at a hearing before the Standards Committee, with sanctions being imposed, and another matter is under investigation.
- The MO and DMO continue to receive complaints which fall outside the jurisdiction of the Standards process but work is underway to deal with this.

General

- Eastlaw have seen an increase in instructions for certain workstreams which have provided additional income to the Council which has contributed to the team having exceeded its annual income target already this financial year.

Human Resources

Workforce Development and People Strategy

- Following workshops facilitated by an external consultant a draft Workforce Development and People Strategy is currently being worked on. Once this is ready for launch this will be done so alongside a new Learning and Development Strategy.

Family Friendly Policy

- Changes in relation to The Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 are due to come into force in April 2025. This will require some changes to be made to the Family Friendly Policy.

Supporting Employees Experiencing Domestic Abuse Policy

- Following the introduction of this policy and the DAHA Accreditation that was achieved by the Council, this policy is being reviewed and some minor adjustments recommended to ensure this continues to be fit for purpose.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy

- Following legislative changes in 2024, this policy has now been rolled out to all officers and members as well as mandatory training for all.

Pay update

- The national minimum wage will increase with effect from 1 April 2025 by £0.77 to £12.21, all employees (except Apprentices) within NNDC are paid the Real Living Wage or above which is currently £12.60.
- The pay policy statement for 2025/26 has been drafted for approval at full council on 19 February 2025.

Elections

- Currently the focus is on the delivery of the Cromer Parish Poll which takes place on Thursday 13th February at four polling stations across the Cromer Town and Suffield Park areas.

Communications

The team has:

- Assisted with external and internal communications from NNDC re devolution/LGR
- Shared pro-active communications with the public regarding National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping (NCERM) data from the Environment Agency, which details projections of potential coastal erosion impacts in North Norfolk over the next 80 years
- Supporting Economic Development's launch of refreshed Invest North Norfolk digital presence and public events scheduled for first half of 2025
- Successfully covered Bacton Energy Summit hosted at NNDC
- Successfully covered and supported celebration event to mark completion of Cromer Coastal Protection Scheme

2 Meetings attended

Meetings attended:

- Business Planning, Cabinet
- Norfolk Leaders Group
- Various Norfolk/Suffolk Leaders meetings concerning Devo/LGR
- Various negotiations on second homes premium usage
- SPARSE SIG
- LGA roundtables
- Coastwise/ NCERM briefing
- National Gas
- Jarrolds
- Norfolk Railway Foundation
- Anglian Water
- Stalham representatives
- Marrams Bowls Club
- Openwide International
- Numerous internal/officer meetings

Attended:

- DCN member briefings/webinars
- Bacton Summit
- Launch of Local Growth Plan for Norfolk
- FLASH Steering Group
- NCC Flood & Drought Summit.

Media Engagement:

- BBC Look East
- BBC Radio Norfolk
- That's TV

- EDP

To Occur:

- NHS Estates
- Cromer Protection Scheme - celebratory event
- Transport East