

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

February 2025

COUNCILLOR SHIRES - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, ASSETS AND PROPERTY SERVICES

For the period December 2024 to February 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

Statement of Accounts

- The 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts have been published on our website; these are due to be signed off after the public inspection period has ended on 25 February 2025. Ernst and Young (EY) will then issue their audit report with a disclaimed opinion. This will be undertaken before the official backstop date of the 28 February 2025.

IT System

- A scoping meeting has taken place with Civica to discuss the requirements of the new asset management module. Once implemented it will allow more robust monitoring of the Councils Asset Register.

Budget 2025/26

- The 2025/26 base budget report and associated working papers were produced for Cabinet. The general Fund Summary showed a balanced position. This position incorporated £1.8m identified savings and additional income along with forecast central government support. Any further revisions will be made before the final budget position is reported to Full Council.

Recruitment

- Interviews for the vacant Chief Technical accountant post have taken place, the successful candidate is due to start at the beginning of the new financial year.

Audit

- The team have been involved in two internal audits, Key Controls and the Finance application (systems based).

Revenues

Collection for 2024/25 as of 28 January 2025.

- The Council Tax collection was 90.11% as of 28 January 2025 against the 31 January 2025 target of 90.40%. This equates to £276k to collect over the remaining few days in January however we have collected £5.02M more than at end of January last year, with a few days to go before end of month and with texts and reminders still being issued.
- The NDR collection was 91.23% as of 28 January 2025 against the 31 January 2025 target of 91.45%. This equates to £58k to collect over the remaining few days in January however we have collected £1.77M more than at end of January last year, with a few days to go before end of month and with texts and reminders still being issued.
- For context, at the end of January last year, we had achieved 90.40% for council tax and 91.56% for NDR, so we are finding things more difficult, but hopefully the gap will narrow over the next few days.
- Revenues continue to work well with legal on several cases that are progressing through the courts to increase revenue for NNDC.

Estates

Vacant property:

- Cornish way letting – There is interest from existing tenant to relocate to a vacant unit, a further unit is being marketed with interest and viewings will be undertaken.
- The Cedars Barns are being advertised with little interest. Vacant Annex has some interest from an existing tenant.
- North Lodge Park hard standing consultation went live during January
- Fakenham Connect first floor offices are being advertised
- North Norfolk Visitor Centre – Advertising of the property for lease is commencing following a Cabinet decision in January

Leases:

- Lease negotiations for the RNLI and Rocket House Café at the Rocket House are subject to governance approvals. Repair of the building is progressing with café completing.
- Short term agreement for car parking at Gold Park continues to progress and is expected to be in place for April 2025.
- Fakenham industrial unit lease renewal with solicitors is nearing completion with an increase in rent.
- Solicitors continue to progress with the lease renewal to North Walsham Football Club in consultation with the funding body.
- Meeting with the Marrams Bowls Club during January 2025 and draft Heads of Terms to be sent. Lease renewal is progressing at Suffield Park.
- Lease renewal negotiations for industrial unit at Catfield, Cornish Way with rental increases continue.
- Donkey shelter – Building redevelopment by community organisation being considered.
- Cromer Council office first floor lease short term lease being

progressed and longer-term lease for a smaller reconfigured area and viability is being considered. This is expected to create additional space with initial discussions with potential public sector tenants.

- Lease negotiations to facilitate the FLASH project are progressing and the land has been registered.
- The beach hut and chalet waiting list is being contacted in relation to the weekly lets sites becoming available for 5-year leases following the Cabinet decision 4th November. Rent review is being implemented.

Disposal:

- Enabling land at Sheringham. The option agreement is to be further extended for a period of 6 months to enable the purchaser time to apply for planning consent for an amended scheme, alongside this advertising of the site for sale, will also commence. Legal transaction in progress.
- Sale of Station Approach putting greens to the Town Council in Sheringham is nearing completion.
- Disposal of Highfield Road car park, Fakenham to local housing association continues to progress.
- Mundesley a disposal of amenity land to Parish Council continues to progress.

Acquisition:

- Supporting Coastwise/Coastal Team in acquiring 2 areas of land in Happisburgh and a further 1 residential property acquisition is progressing, with 1 sale having completed.

Property Services

Marrams Bowls Club

- Asbestos removal works have been undertaken at the Marrams Bowls club.

Cromer Offices

- Cromer offices final phase LED lighting project is now complete.

Public Conveniences

- Works at Albert Street Holt public conveniences demolition and rebuild will be completed by the end of February.
- All changing places external funding has been secured.

Pier

- Pier sub structure survey has been completed and is currently being reviewed.
- Works are now underway on the Pier backstage refurbishment works with handover back to Openwide Ltd on the 20 March 2025.

Health and Safety

- Collaborative working with Corporate H&S and Estates to review

NNDC asbestos management procedures following audit by the HSE.

Projects

- Rocket House restaurant works are complete.
- RNLI and public conveniences (Rocket House) tender being worked up.
- Reef remedial works are being programmed.
- Sheringham Little Theatre remedial works are in progress.
- Cedars remedial works are in progress.
- Works to the Watch House Cromer are being scoped.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

- The Finance team will be working with budget managers to prepare the period 10 budget monitoring report (Jan 25). This is the final position reported to members before the 2024/25 outturn. It will provide an updated forecast of the likely outturn taking into account additional costs, savings and movements in reserves.
- Preparation for the 2024/25-year end closedown and completion of the Statement of Accounts. Whilst the exact dates of the EY external audit are not yet known it is anticipated that this will take place in the autumn 2025.
- Finance currently has a vacant accountancy assistant role. It is hoped that the successful candidate will provide the opportunity to succession plan.

Estates

Asset Management

- Asset valuation procurement
- Asset Management Plan

Revenues

Second Homes Work

- North Norfolk District Council has voted to implement the premium charge from April 2025 and have now agreed a deal with Norfolk County Council as to how a proportion of the additional Council Tax receipts generated from the premium in North Norfolk can be used to address the acute housing pressures which exist in the district – through investing in new social housing developments with Housing Association partners.

- There is additional work needed here to deal with the increase enquiries and to implement measures to reduce avoidance of the premium.

System Procurement

- The Civica Openrevenues system will expire for Revenues and Benefits on 1 October 2025, and we have agreed to procure a new contract with Civica. We have managed to get more modules for less costs which include the Business Districts Software.

Training/Development

- We have a have a team leader nearing completion of her level 5 CMI management qualification and a Revenues Officer now starting the level 3 certificate in Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV).

Service Improvements

- Online forms - reviewing and improving the most used customer paper forms is continuing. We have gone live with a new council tax direct debit form that replaces one by Capita. We are working on a Non-Domestic (Business) Rates direct debit form and a Change of Address form.
- The Long-term empty property review forms as part of our Business Process Review of the current process has been completed and is now live with updated webpages.
- We have also completed the work on the Second Homes Review form which we are considering on using going forward linked to annual billing. The plan will be to send this via email, mobile text and then paper for those customers who do not have digital methods to keep the costs down.

OPEN Revenues Workflow Disk Space discussion

- Revenues and Benefit services in conjunction with IT and System Teams are reviewing the amount of disc space being used with a view to the size reducing. We are close to capacity and have agreed to implement processes to delete and archive old electronic accounts and documents stored that are no longer needed by the services.
- This work is important, and the Revenues data has been tested and implemented in our live system. It is hoped a rolling plan to undertake this exercise can start so we are in a much better place before annual billing starts each year when we need to create and save another year's worth of data.

Property Services

Capital Works

- Capital works bids for 2025/2026 submitted.

Budget

- Budget saving proposals for 2025/2026 submitted.