

CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2027 - ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2025/26

Executive Summary This report and accompanying appendix present the 2023 – 2027 Corporate Plan Action Plan for the period April 2025 – March 2026 to Cabinet for approval.

Options considered The actions detailed in the Action Plan have been developed in support of the five themes in the adopted Corporate Plan recognising the increasing pressure on the Council’s budget, the moves towards establishing a Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk under the Government’s English Devolution programme and proposed Local Government Reorganisation which will change the context in which the District Council operates and works over the next three years, alongside continuing with Business As Usual maintaining service delivery for the district’s residents until any proposals for new unitary councils in Norfolk are agreed.

The actions proposed seek to balance the capacity of the organisation to deliver, taking into account the staff and financial resources available to the Council, the need to focus on supporting the transition of services into any new unitary council(s) and the potential to access external funding or partnership resources, with the aspirations laid out in the Corporate Plan.

In this respect it is recognised that there is some degree of choice and prioritisation as to the actions proposed for delivery in the period April 2025 – March 2026, although perhaps less compared to previous years given the need to create capacity to respond to and engage with the process of local government reorganisation across the County

Consultation(s) The development of the 2025/26 Action Plan has been somewhat later than in previous years when the Annual Action Plan has been agreed in the autumn. This has been due to uncertainties around the 2025/26 local government financial settlement impacting on the setting of the Council’s 2025/26 budget, new policy announcements being made by Government during the autumn following the July General Election, and the publication of the English Devolution White Paper which raises the prospect of significant public service reform through proposals for devolution and local government reorganisation.

The 2025/26 Annual Action Plan has been developed against this background but has involved processes of consultation and engagement in terms of development of a strengthened Medium-Term Financial Strategy and preparation of the 2025/26 budget, which has been taken through Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny processes before adoption at the 19th February 2025 meeting of Full Council.

Recommendations	That the Cabinet approves the Corporate Plan Annual Action Plan for 2025/26.
Reasons for recommendations	Sound management of the authority's staff, property and financial resources to deliver projects and initiatives which support improved service delivery and positive outcomes aligned to the previously agreed Corporate Plan themes and seeks to position North Norfolk's residents, communities and businesses strongly in the context of any proposals to establish a Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority through the English Devolution proposals and any related programme of local government reorganisation in Norfolk which seeks to replace the existing two-tier County and District structure of local government with unitary councils.
Background papers	2023 – 2027 Corporate Plan

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Tim Adams, Leader of the Council
Contact Officer	Steve Blatch, Chief Executive Email:- steve.blatch@north-norfolk.gov.uk Tel:- 01263 516232

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	This report details the list of actions and proposals the Council proposes taking forward in support of the five Corporate Plan themes in the twelve months April 2025 – March 2026.
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Proposed actions, projects or initiatives will need to give due consideration to the Council's financial position as detailed in finance reports and a revised Medium-Term Financial Strategy and have the necessary resources allocated to them or efficiency savings as identified through the preparation of the 2025/26 budget.
Council Policies & Strategies	See comment under Corporate Plan heading above

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	Yes – there is no private or confidential information to be considered by this report
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	N/A

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report and accompanying appendix present the 2023 – 2027 Corporate Plan Action Plan for the period April 2025 – March 2026 to Cabinet for approval.
- 1.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the actions to be taken forward through the 2025/26 Annual Action Plan recognising the increasingly challenged financial context in which the Council is operating as recently agreed through the approval of the 2025/26 budget and the need for the Council to create capacity to engage constructively with the devolution, public service reform and local government reorganisation agendas as detailed in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, alongside maintaining Business As Usual core service delivery.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1 Following the District Council elections held on 4th May 2023, the Council adopted a new Corporate Plan for the four years 2023 – 2027 at its meeting held on 19th July 2023.
- 2.2 In agreeing the new Corporate Plan and making a positive recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Plan at its 19th July 2023 meeting, the Cabinet meeting of 3rd July 2023 resolved to :-

- 1. Agree the content of the draft Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027 as a statement of the Council's intent and ambition for the term of this Council administration.**
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree any minor revisions and changes to the final draft of the Corporate Plan document and thereafter the format / design of the document for publication, following adoption by Full Council.**
- 3. That Cabinet publishes an Action Plan detailing how the objectives detailed in the Corporate Plan will be delivered / achieved to its November 2023 meeting; and**
- 4. Recommended to Full Council that it adopts the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027.**

- 2.2 In agreeing the Corporate Plan members were advised that, given experience of delivering against the 2019 – 2023 Corporate Plan where organisational capacity was initially hindered by the need for the Council to develop a local response to the COVID pandemic and subsequently responding to the cost of living pressures experienced in the national economy; there would be some merit in looking to develop an Annual Action Plan of project delivery in each year of the Plan.
- 2.3 This would allow the Council to respond flexibly to changing circumstances over the four-year lifetime of the Corporate Plan, not least in response to possible changes to the policy framework nationally associated with a General Election which had to be held before January 2025.
- 2.4 This position has subsequently been confirmed as sound given the significant number of policy announcements made by the incoming Government following

the July 2024 General Election across a range of service areas (Planning, Waste, Housing, Local Government Finance) requiring a response from the Council and then the publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024 responding to which is likely to command a significant amount of corporate capacity throughout the coming year.

3. Proposals and Options

- 3.1 In looking to agree the Annual Action Plan for 2025/26 consideration has been given to the progress made in delivering the objectives and actions in the 2024/25 Action Plan. Progress against these objectives has been reported regularly to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, most recently to the February 2025 cycle of meetings, with overall good progress and achievements having been made.
- 3.2 However, given the increasingly challenging financial context in which the Council is operating and the demands which will be placed on the authority in the coming year related to proposals for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, it has been considered necessary to significantly review our capacity to propose new actions for delivery during the period April 2025 to March 2026.
- 3.3 This year's Annual Action Plan has therefore been "pared back" with a significantly reduced number of proposed actions and commitments, albeit that actions in respect of delivering the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub and co-ordinating action at the Bacton Energy Hub site following the recent Summit event have been retained and strengthened. The attached appendix therefore now outlines a proposed series of actions to be taken forward through an Action Plan covering the period April 2025 – March 2026.
- 3.4 Cabinet is therefore now asked to approve the Corporate Plan Action Plan for 2025/26.

4. Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The outcomes from this report will contribute to the Corporate Plan priorities and reflect the capacity and availability of resources across the Council to support project delivery and positioning of North Norfolk's residents, communities and businesses in the context of any new Combined Authority and local government reorganisation during the 2025/26 civic year.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 The proposals made within this report and the Annual Action Plan for 2025/26 reflect the financial resources and capacity issues available to support project delivery and improved working in the 2025/26 civic year
- 5.2 The Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) has provided the following comments in advising on the preparation of this report:-

Comments from the S151 Officer

The Annual Action Plan has been wisely updated to reflect the position the Council finds itself in whereby external factors have resulted in a uncertain financial position over the medium term. It has been pared back so that existing schemes can continue to completion and so that priorities can be delivered. The proposals are prudent and sensible in light of the uncertainty around the future financial position and the capacity for our staffing resource.

6. Legal Implications and Comments from the Monitoring Officer

No specific legal issues arise regarding this report around the Corporate Action Plan for the Year 25/26 which now takes into account the current financial climate and the capacity issues and challenges that Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation will bring.

7. Risks

7.1 None as a direct consequence of this report.

8. Net Zero Target

8.1 None as a direct consequence of this report, although one of the Corporate Plan's five themes is "our Greener Future" where the issue of Net Zero is a key consideration for and objective of the authority over the lifetime of the Corporate Plan.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

9.1 None as a direct consequence of this report, although a key theme running through the Corporate Plan is the issue of inclusion and equity – particularly under the themes - Meeting our local housing need; Developing our communities; Investing in our Local Economy and Infrastructure and A strong, responsible and accountable council.

10. Community Safety issues

10.1 None as a direct consequence of this report

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

That the Cabinet approves the Corporate Plan Annual Action Plan for 2025/26.