

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

March 2025

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

For the period February 2025 to March 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

Budget Monitoring

- The period 10 (Jan 25) Budget monitoring report has been prepared for cabinet. This anticipates a much improved position to that forecast reported at period 6 (Sept 24). In Sept it was forecast that there would be a £0.995m deficit and this has now moved to a small surplus (£0.048m) forecast at Jan 25. This favourable swing is largely down to improved income as well as significant savings in employee and supplies and services budgets. There is still expected to be shortfalls in Housing benefit subsidy and interest receivable from investments.

Budget 2025/26

- Balanced Base Budget for 2025-26 was presented to Full Council in February. This has been uploaded on to the Councils finance system ready for monitoring in April.

Recruitment

- Interviews took place for the Chief Technical accountant post, the successful candidate is due to start at the end of March.
- The recruitment process for the accountancy assistant post has just started. Successful candidates will be invited to interview in late March.

Accounts

- All outstanding Statements of Accounts have now been signed off by the Auditors. This means that we are now up to date and can proceed with normal time scales for 2024/25. The timescale for a draft statement of accounts for 2024/25 is to be published by 30th June 2025. This is still a month later than pre Covid deadlines.

Audits

- Audit planning has started for 2024/25, interim evidence has been requested from EY.
- Two internal audits are nearing completion, Key Controls and Finance Application.

Revenues

Collection for 2024/25 as of 28 February 2025.

- The Council Tax collection was 94.27% against the 28 February 2025 target of 94.25%. This equates to an excess of £18.5k. We have collected over £90.3m to date.
- The NDR collection was 95.72% against the 28 February 2025 target of 95.00%. This equates to an excess of £189.5k. We have collected over £25.4m to date.
- For context, at the end of February last year, we had achieved 94.37 for council tax and 95.53 for NDR, so we are finding things more difficult with council tax collection.
- 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 has received offers following marketing, which officers are reviewing.
- The Cedars Barns continue to be advertised. Vacant Annex has some interest from an existing tenant.
- North Lodge Park hard standing consultation closed 14th February.
- Fakenham Connect first floor offices are being advertised
- North Norfolk Visitor Centre – Advertising of the property for lease has started with viewings being undertaken.

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 having completed.
- 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 have been 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 new lettings is underway and notice of rent increase has been issued and will take effect from 1st April 2025

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 and meeting held. Quotes for remarketing obtained.
- Sale of Station Approach putting greens to the Town Council in Sheringham is to be put on hold to enable a whole review of the asset portfolio due to LGR.
- 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 1 area of land in Happisburgh as a replacement car park and 2 further residential properties. 2 purchases have been completed.
- Supporting Housing with purchase of additional properties. Offers have been made and 2 purchases are under offer and Eastlaw instructed.

Property Services

Play Area

- The play area at the Leas Sheringham, the design has been approved and has been delivered ready for installation. Commencement of works is the 24th March.

The Marrams

- Works to reposition the lighting columns and footpath at the Marrams footpath Cromer has seen the 1st phase successfully completed and reopened to the public. These works are now complete.
- 2nd phase of works post capital award is now being reviewed.
- Asbestos removal works have been undertaken at the Marrams Bowls club.
- Roofing works required to the Marrams bowls club.

The Pier

- Working with Leisure Services and Openwide on the Pier backstage refurbishment
- Works are now underway with handover back to Openwide Ltd on the 20th March.

Holt Country Park

- Collaborative working with Countryside on a bid submission for funding for an educational unit at Holt Country Park. Bid submission has been successful so now scoping the works.
- After successful capital submission works at HCP will now include refurbishment of existing public convenience, installation of new foul drainage system, increase of car park spaces, construction of ECO

classroom (grant funded)

Cabbell Park

- Collaborative working with Countryside to scope works for new clubhouse at Cabbell Park football ground.
- Consultants have now been appointed.

Rocket House

- Rocket House restaurant works are complete.
- Rocket House ground floor public conveniences and lift foyer area refurbishment works are to be fast tracked outside of the museum works.
- This will allow the public conveniences to be back on track before the start of the summer.
- RNLI and public conveniences (Rocket House) tender being worked up. A three-month damp monitoring and recording regime has been commissioned.
- Works to the Watch House Cromer are being scoped by an external consultant and a procurement exercise is underway for structural design to support the cliff.

The Reef

- Reef remedial works are being programmed.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

Accounts

- The Finance team are working on the detailed timetable and procedure notes to provide managers with support at the end of the financial year and closedown process.
- Completion of the Outturn position (P12 Budget monitoring as at March 2025)

Estates

Asset Management

- Asset valuation procurement
- Asset Management Plan and Community Asset Transfer update
- Asset Review in connection with Local Government Review.

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.

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 are about to go live with a new Non-Domestic (Business) Rates direct debit form that replaces one by Capita. We are working on a Non-Domestic (Business) Rates 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 online Second Homes form which has gone live linked to our webpages to help with the increase in annual billing enquiries challenging the new second homes premium charge.

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

2025/26

- Capital works bids for 2025/2026 submitted. Outcome has been published.
- Budget saving proposals for 2025/2026 submitted. Outcome has been published.
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Temporary Accommodation

- Working with EELGA on options for temporary housing solution.
- Membership of steering group to review EELGA options.

Procurement

- Consultant contract tender exercise is now complete and under evaluation
- Working up tender for car park repairs from current capital fund.
- Working up tender brief for new asset management system. Current contract expires June 2025 with no further extension allowed. Tender exercise is now complete and under evaluation.

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Meetings attended

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