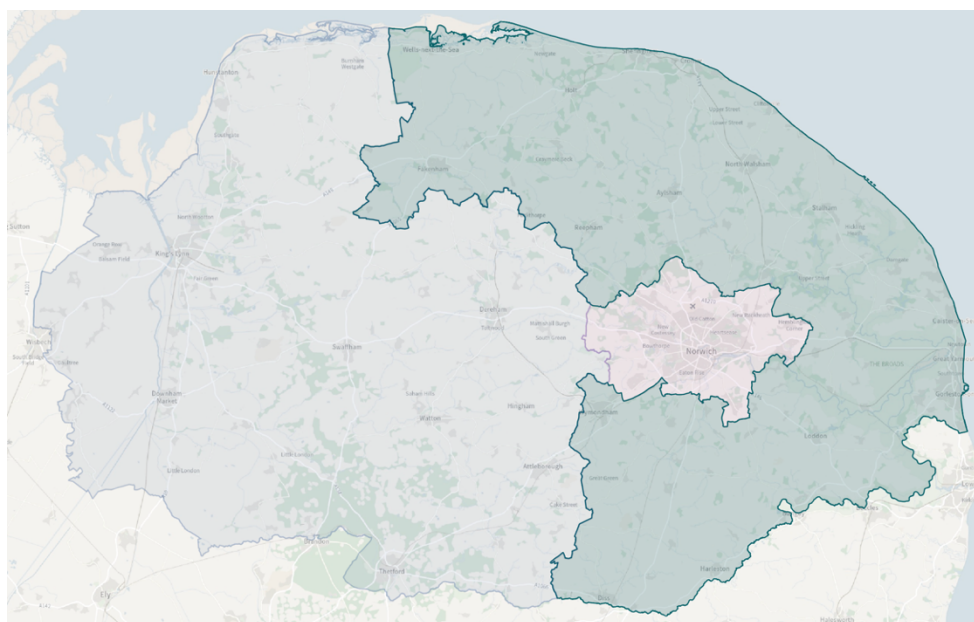


# LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION



## *THE PROPOSAL FOR EAST NORFOLK*

*Prepared on behalf of:*  
*Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk,*  
*Breckland District Council,*  
*Broadland District Council,*  
*Great Yarmouth Borough Council,*  
*North Norfolk District Council,*  
*and Norwich City Council*

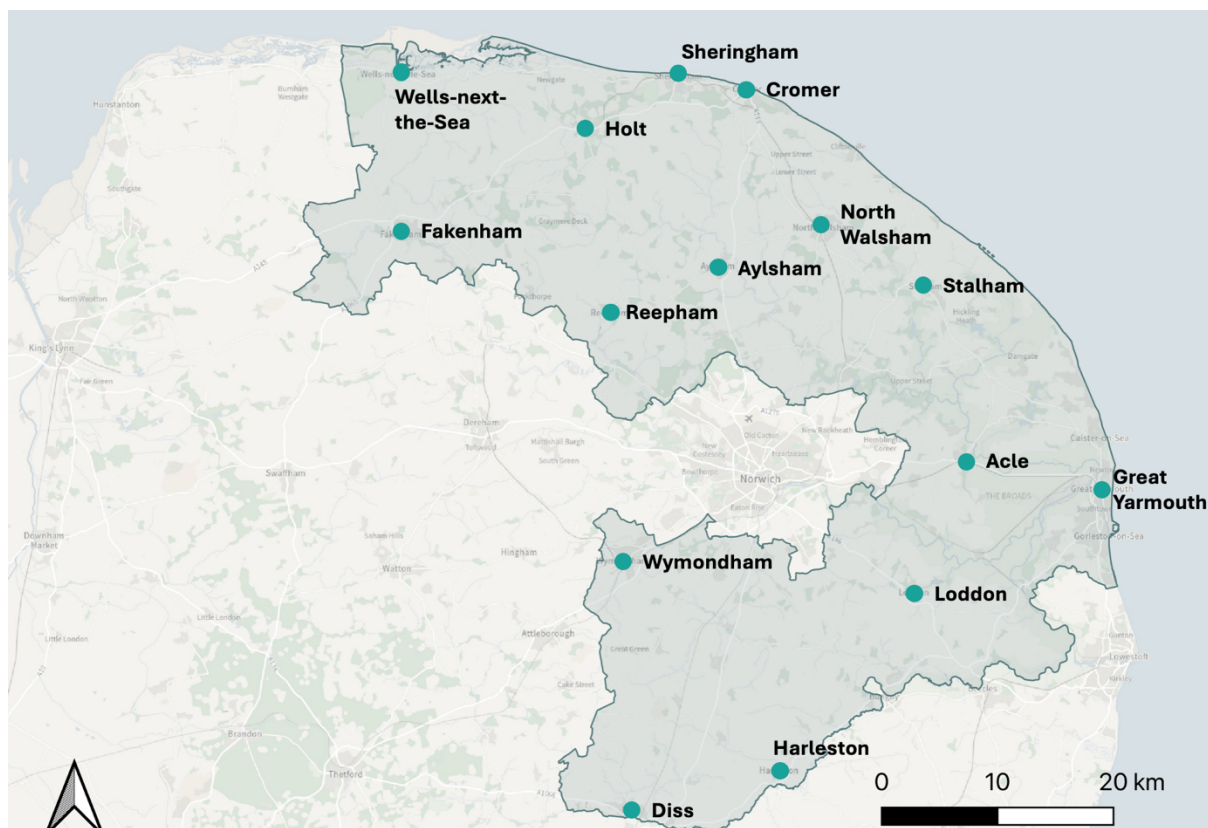
**[SEPTEMBER 2025]**

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# 1. Executive summary

Our proposal for the reorganisation of local government in East Norfolk presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver reform, renewal, and innovation in how we serve our communities. We propose creating a single unitary authority that will enhance service delivery, improve financial resilience, and support sustainable growth across our area. By aligning services with local needs and opportunities, we can unlock a decade of renewal for our public services, economy, and society.



*Figure 1: Map of the proposed boundary of East Norfolk*

East Norfolk is formed from the entirety of the current North Norfolk district and Great Yarmouth borough, and from parts of both Broadland and South Norfolk. While our geography and communities are defined and constrained profoundly by the coast, its main river catchments and the Broads, it also stretches into the heart of South Norfolk's rural and market towns.

Given our geography and natural assets, we are uniquely positioned to consolidate national leadership in the clean energy transition and green technology, with significant assets and sustained growth and opportunity in offshore wind, carbon capture, and energy transmission and significant potential for hydrogen production. Our area's diverse mix of coastal, rural, and suburban communities presents both

challenges and opportunities that require a specifically local approach. This needs to recognise and reconcile these emerging growth opportunities with distinctive and protected landscapes and attractions that support and sustain a vibrant and broad-based tourism and visitor economy, flourishing market towns and a strong agricultural base. Reorganisation will enable us to address these challenges more effectively with a clear focus on the issues that matter most to people across East Norfolk.

If East Norfolk were already a unitary authority, it would be the 16<sup>th</sup> largest of the current 54 unitary councils in England. Our size and scale mean that East Norfolk will be a sustainable and stable authority, able to withstand the challenges of delivering public services to hundreds of thousands of residents. Our analysis shows that if all current budgets in Norfolk were consolidated into our three proposed unitaries then East Norfolk would have started this year with a small budget surplus, even before the benefits of consolidation, rationalisation and reform are taken into account.

The coastal and rural communities in East Norfolk are distinct and different to those in Greater Norwich or the West of the county. There are exciting opportunities around the 'energy coast', a strong tourism economy to build upon, and an abundance of natural assets including the Broads. However, we face specific local challenges around deprivation, low skills and poor health outcomes. A one-size fits all approach to public services won't respond to our specific local circumstances, whereas taking a tailored, hyper-local approach will allow for the necessary innovation, reform and optimal resource allocation to early help and prevention for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Our new unitary authority will prioritise the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services. The proposed operating model is designed to break down siloed ways of working and create a more joined-up, preventative, and person-centred approach to service delivery. Key areas of focus include:

- **Healthy & Thriving Communities:** Integrating housing, health, employment, and skills services to provide proactive, locally rooted support.
- **Adult Social Care:** Establishing a community-focused, prevention-first approach to reduce demand for acute care and support independence.
- **Children's Social Care:** Strengthening early intervention and prevention, prioritising family-based placements, and supporting transitions to adulthood.

- **Education & SEND:** Delivering local support to strengthen partnerships with schools, families, and employment hubs, and addressing challenges around inclusion.
- **“Place” and Environmental Services:** Strengthening our approaches to creating vibrant, healthy, and sustainable communities where much of the public realm and tourism assets and infrastructure in our historic market towns, coastal communities and the Broads are provided by existing district authorities with significant discretionary spend supporting our local economy and creating places our residents and communities value.

The transition to our new unitary authority will involve careful planning and coordination to ensure a smooth and effective implementation. Key considerations include:

- **Staffing and Workforce:** Developing shared staffing structures that account for existing partnership arrangements (i.e. Broadland and South Norfolk s113 agreements) and changes to boundaries, whilst ensuring fair and transparent allocation of staff to the new unitary councils.
- **Arm's Length Companies and Joint Ventures:** Assessing the health and strategic alignment of existing entities and (as appropriate) integrating them into the new authority.
- **Service Models:** Managing complex service delivery models, including waste collection, street scene and resort infrastructure, and social housing, to ensure continuity and efficiency during the transition.

Our proposed East Norfolk unitary authority is well-positioned to deliver long-term resilience and high-quality services across its diverse communities. By aligning services with local needs, leveraging our strong financial base, and implementing a preventative and person-centred approach to service delivery, East Norfolk can achieve sustainable growth and improved outcomes for all residents. This is our vision for a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

## 2. Economic distinctiveness

East Norfolk is proud to be at the forefront of the UK's climate transition. This is a place of ambition, innovation and resilience, ready to lead inclusive, place-based economic growth. At the heart of this transformation is Great Yarmouth and our 70-mile coastline, where regeneration around the harbour and a major port expansion announcement are unlocking world-class opportunities in clean energy and trade. From our coastal hubs to inland market towns and rural communities, we are powering growth rooted in clean energy, rural enterprise and environmental stewardship. Alongside this, East Norfolk is the gateway to the Broads, with miles of world-class beaches and internationally significant protected landscapes. Our thriving market towns sustain rural communities with opportunity and services, while a vibrant arts, culture and heritage offer underpins a resilient, broad-based visitor economy. We are home to a strong agricultural sector and pockets of genuine innovation in food and drink, reinforcing our position as a place where natural assets, enterprise and creativity work hand in hand.

Our economy generates over a quarter of Norfolk's total output, with Gross Value Added (GVA) accounting for 28% of the county's total.<sup>1</sup> We have an employment density of 51 jobs for every 100 residents<sup>2</sup>, supported by a vibrant business community of 364 enterprises per 10,000 people.<sup>3</sup> Our diverse economy, dominated by small and medium enterprises, is anchored in renewable energy, marine services, tourism, agriculture, and healthcare, and is particularly well placed to lead in clean energy and green technology.

As the scale and pace of growth increases in sectors such as nuclear newbuild, offshore wind, operations and maintenance, hydrocarbon asset decommissioning and Carbon Capture Usage and Storage, our communities are seeing growing demand for skilled workers to fill higher-value jobs. We are also seeing strong potential in solar power, electric vehicle infrastructure, and retrofit innovation. Local businesses and residents are increasingly integrated into offshore energy supply chains and regional clean growth strategies.

Crucially, we have the physical and strategic assets to deliver on this potential. Our geography spans nationally significant assets in offshore wind, natural gas supply,

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<sup>1</sup> ONS, UK small area gross value added estimates, 2022

<sup>2</sup> ONS, Job density, 2023

<sup>3</sup> ONS, Business counts, 2024

carbon capture and pan-European energy transmission, anchored by Great Yarmouth's Energy Coast and the Bacton Energy Hub, which currently handles over one third of the UK's natural gas demand, serving both domestic and industrial needs, including electricity generation. This source of energy is likely to remain critical for at least the next two decades, underpinning our national energy security and supporting the transition to cleaner alternatives. The role of gas supply and transmission must therefore be recognised as a foundational element of our energy strategy.

Additionally, hydrogen presents an opportunity for the future as our strategic positioning and infrastructure make East Norfolk well-placed to support future development in this area. Crucially, the North Sea energy transition in its widest sense offers the chance to create sustainable, higher-value jobs across construction, maritime and technical sectors, with further opportunities expected from the nearby nuclear new build.

Building on our existing collaboration with East Suffolk, we are also working to position the cluster in international markets, attracting foreign direct investment and strengthening our role as a globally recognised energy hub. To fully realise this potential, we require a governance model that can strategically align skills development, regeneration, and investment with industry needs, ensuring that our energy economy is not only sustained but actively leveraged to secure long-term competitive advantage.

Our distinctiveness, however, reaches far beyond our strengths in clean energy. Market and resort towns including Acle, Aylsham, Cromer, Diss, Fakenham, Harleston, Holt, Loddon, North Walsham, Reepham, Sheringham, Stalham, Wells-next-the-Sea and Wymondham form a dynamic network of local service centres across our extensive rural geography. These towns are centres of local employment and public service provision, reducing isolation and strengthening the social and economic fabric of our communities.

Our inland areas foster strong small business networks and an entrepreneurial culture, reflected in high SME survival rates and significant potential for housing growth. SMEs in manufacturing, construction, and professional services underpin the region's economy but require targeted support to innovate and compete. Hethel Engineering Centre provides a proven blueprint: in just 14 years it has supported the creation of over 1,000 jobs, incubated more than 200 businesses, and supported over 180 start-ups, driving high-value growth in engineering, clean tech, and advanced manufacturing.



We recognise the opportunities LGR presents to address longstanding structural challenges such as inequality and climate change adaptation and resilience. Pockets of deprivation constrain individual opportunities and outcomes with, for example, some wards within Great Yarmouth remaining amongst the most deprived in the UK, facing deep-rooted social and health challenges, while rural areas, particularly in the north, which are attractive to large numbers of retiring incomers, contend with loss of services and poor digital and mobile infrastructure exacerbated by the needs and demands of an aging population. These pressures are reflected in high levels of economic inactivity, particularly among women, and a workforce where many SMEs struggle with attracting, developing and retaining skilled workforces. As a result, productivity is constrained and access to higher-value jobs is limited, keeping household incomes below the national average. We are also on the frontline of coastal erosion, flood risk, and water scarcity.

A new East Norfolk unitary will enable us to accelerate the progress we are making on tackling these interconnected challenges. We are linking skills, educational attainment, investment, regeneration, housing, and health more effectively. Initiatives such as the Coastal Navigators Network are helping to lift people out of poverty and build a workforce equipped to take advantage of new economic opportunities. Strong local authority-led partnerships, through the Coastal Adaptation Supplementary Planning Document and initiatives such as Coastwise, are delivering creative, community-led solutions, ranging from planned relocations to innovative funding schemes. The Broads National Park and the Norfolk Coast National Landscape Area exemplify how environmental stewardship can go hand in hand with sustainable tourism and green economic growth. By aligning new housing with areas of job growth, we can build sustainable, well-connected communities. Coordinated planning will support affordable housing, temporary accommodation, and infrastructure delivery, ensuring growth is inclusive and aligned with employment opportunities.

We are ready to demonstrate, as a national exemplar, how rural and coastal areas can lead in clean growth and climate resilience without eroding their shared and individual identities. Achieving this requires governance at the right scale. A unitary East Norfolk authority, working in combination with a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), would provide the flexibility to address socio-economic challenges such as deprivation, ageing, and poor health, while maximising opportunities in clean energy, agri-food, and tourism.



### 3. Demographic distinctiveness

We are proud of the people and places that make up East Norfolk. With 336,524 residents, around 37% of Norfolk's population, our communities are not only diverse, resilient, and deeply rooted in place. From our coastal communities to our inland market towns, our demographic profile is distinct from both Greater Norwich and West Norfolk. Looking ahead, our population is projected to grow to 406,714 by 2035<sup>4</sup>, reflecting both the vitality of the present and the potential for an even stronger future.

Yet East Norfolk faces significant challenges. Most of our population lives outside Great Yarmouth, in coastal and rural communities where demographic pressures are most acute. What truly distinguishes our area is our age profile: as a popular destination for retirement, we have one of the oldest populations in the country. 28.2% of our residents are aged 65 and over, compared with 19.1% in Greater Norwich and around 18.6% across the England.<sup>5</sup>

Deprivation and poor health are persistent challenges in our area, with 36.4% of households deprived in at least one dimension, exceeding the England average of 33.5%.<sup>6</sup> The town of Great Yarmouth remains among the most deprived areas nationally. Disposable household incomes across large parts of East Norfolk are also below the national average, reflecting the prevalence of lower-paying sectors such as tourism, retail, and care.

Our skills profile also presents a challenge. The 2021 Census found that Great Yarmouth Borough Council and parts of North Norfolk District Council had a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications (26.5%) than Norfolk (20%) and England (18%).<sup>7</sup> By contrast, rural parts of Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council show much higher levels of educational attainment. Addressing these inequalities will be critical to raising aspirations and equipping local people with the skills required by new and emerging sectors of the economy, particularly in renewable energy and the wider energy transition.

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<sup>4</sup> Population projections based on Person-Per-Household Method, via GeoPlace LLP. Available at: <https://www.geoplace.co.uk/case-studies/understanding-local-populations-between-censuses>. Final projections are subject to client sign off.

<sup>5</sup> ONS, Mid year population estimate, 2022

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Census, 2021

We also face acute and complex housing pressures. While the median house price of £270,000 appears affordable, the house-price-to-earnings ratio of 8.1, the highest in Norfolk, reveals real affordability pressures for local people<sup>8</sup>. However, this headline figure masks deeper issues. High numbers of number of second and holiday homes, particularly in coastal and rural areas, reduces the availability of homes for residents and drives up prices. The private rented sector is shrinking, making it harder for those on lower or unstable incomes to find secure accommodation. Retirement destinations see strong demand from cash buyers, who are often able to outbid local people reliant on average or below-average wages. These factors combine to create a housing market that is increasingly inaccessible for younger people, key workers, and families, and which places additional pressure on social and supported housing, as well as on services for those at risk of homelessness.

Addressing these challenges requires ensuring the supply of the right housing mix – not only affordable and social housing, but also aspirational homes that attract and retain the people and skills needed to grow the economy, supported by wider place-making. In some areas, such as Great Yarmouth, intervention will also be needed to de-risk residential and commercial development where low land values and viability deficits otherwise constrain delivery. These pressures limit opportunity for residents and add to demand on local services, from adult social care and adapted housing to the NHS and workforce participation. They underline the urgent need for integrated, preventative approaches to health, care, and employment support.

A new unitary authority for East Norfolk, working in partnership with a Mayoral Strategic Authority, will give us the tools to turn these challenges into strengths. By bringing together housing, health, skills, transport, and digital infrastructure in a single, locally accountable strategy, we can plan flexibly for an ageing society, tackle health inequalities, expand training and digital access, and align housing growth with employment opportunities. This joined-up approach will allow us to deliver more efficient and effective services which respond to the needs of our distinct communities. We will unlock productivity, empower communities, and create clear pathways for our residents from low qualifications into skilled employment. We will become leaders in designing age-friendly places that meet people's needs, reduce pressure on the NHS, and enable older residents to live well and independently for longer. Our distinct demographic profile will become a platform for resilience and long-term prosperity.

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<sup>8</sup> ONS, House price to residence-based earnings ratio, 2025

## 4. Democratic representation & engagement

*East Norfolk's democratic model is designed to ensure that communities have a meaningful voice in shaping decisions. As a unitary authority, it will be led by a single council, working in partnership with existing town and parish councils. This will be supported by a strengthened neighbourhood engagement model that reflects the distinct needs of East Norfolk's towns, villages, and coastal communities.*

### Councillor Numbers and Representation

We are proposing a councillor model that delivers both efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring East Norfolk has the right number of elected representatives to run the new unitary across issues of governance, accountability, and representation.

Currently, Norfolk has 399 councillors across its two-tier system. Our proposal streamlines this to 200 councillors across Norfolk, with 65 for East Norfolk.

Unitary Area	Proposed Number	Likely Average Cllr: Electorate Ratio*	Electorate
Greater Norwich	63	1: 3,394	213,837
East Norfolk	65	1:4,080	265,188
West Norfolk	72	1: 3,298	237,434
<b>Total:</b>	<b>200</b>		<b>716,459</b>

*Table 1: Councillor numbers*

This number supports council functions, including Cabinet, scrutiny, regulatory and key service provision, and local governance. It provides the capacity needed to represent East Norfolk on external bodies and partnerships, and to maintain strong local links with communities. Councillors will be expected to lead across multiple domains, from decision-making and scrutiny to partnership working and neighbourhood engagement. The model ensures there is sufficient capacity to populate committees, represent diverse geographies, and manage casework effectively, supported by dedicated member development and support functions.

Interim warding arrangements are being developed in line with LGBCE principles, including electoral equality, community identity, and effective local government.

### Developing a neighbourhood representation model with our communities

The three-unitary model enables an innovative, neighbourhood-based approach, with East Norfolk expected to comprise around six neighbourhoods, areas of approximately 50,000-60,000 residents each. This scale allows for close collaboration with communities and for neighbourhood models that are genuinely responsive to local needs and priorities. By working at this level, we can design bespoke approaches that reflect the diversity of our communities and the different ways in which they prefer to engage.

Existing town and parish councils will retain their independence and functions. In unparished areas, neighbourhood engagement will likely be facilitated through informal forums and partnerships with public services and the voluntary sector. These forums, while not part of the formal governance structure, will serve as platforms for community voice and collaboration. We are committed to working with government and partners to ensure neighbourhood models are aligned with wider public service provision, particularly around health, wellbeing, and early intervention.

Our approach is rooted in innovation and continuous improvement. We will work closely with our communities throughout implementation to shape this approach, engaging and listening to develop a model that is tailored, inclusive, and effective. We will draw on best practice from across the UK and beyond, and will test and learn as we go, adapting our approach to what works best for each neighbourhood.

This approach aims to:

- Ensure sustained engagement with under-represented groups
- Create space for bespoke, community-led service design
- Enable innovative partnerships across wider public service provision, including health, education, police, and the voluntary sector
- Support flexible and inclusive formats for participation, reflecting the different needs and preferences of our communities
- Centre health and wellbeing at the heart of local decision-making

### Protecting Ceremonial Status

We are committed to protecting our historic assets and civic traditions, including the mayoralty, regalia, and ceremonial functions, as part of LGR. These are integral to our local identity and democratic heritage. The government has confirmed its intention to preserve ceremonial responsibilities through reorganisation. However, this commitment must be reflected explicitly in the Structural Changes Order. This is particularly important for Great Yarmouth and Gorleston which currently hold

ceremonial status but are unparished. We will seek to retain these important functions through the Charter Trustee Model. Charter Trustees will be responsible for upholding ceremonial duties and managing civic assets. This reflects a commitment to place-based civic leadership, ensuring that ceremonial roles remain rooted in the communities they historically represent. This is a moment to reaffirm the value of civic leadership and ensure that our communities retain the traditions that connect them to place, history, and public life, such as twinning arrangements, the freemen of the borough, and other long-standing civic customs.

## 5. New council target operating model

This section sets out the proposed operating model for East Norfolk, setting out how the overall operating model will bring services together to innovate and achieve better outcomes for residents. It also includes highlights our approaches to service delivery – a detailed summary of our future vision for services can be found in Appendix E.

### 5.1. Drivers of change

East Norfolk is facing stark challenges, with deep-rooted deprivation in coastal towns, rapid population growth in some market towns, hidden need in rural areas and an ageing population.

With the largest population of the three proposed unitary councils, East Norfolk as a unitary will inherit the highest number of Children in Care, the highest number of Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) and the largest number of adults requiring support from the council. This mix of demand indicates that whilst there are examples of good practice in early intervention across the area, there is a fundamental need to reform how services are delivered to residents to ensure long-term positive outcomes.

More adults in East Norfolk need support from the most acute forms of care than in the other proposed unitaries, indicating a lack of focus within current provision on effective management of care, and with a higher proportion of working age adults needing support from the council – there is a clear need for a change in direction to prevent dependency on support becoming the norm.

For young people in East Norfolk, more children with additional needs are educated somewhere other than a mainstream education setting than in the other two proposed unitaries, which, alongside increasing use of independent specialist schools and exclusions, indicates a local education system which is not connecting all young people to the best possible outcomes. Comparatively high numbers of children requiring support from social care also may indicate that family support is not being consistently used across the area, and a need for better tailoring of support.

There is a high proportion of second homes and holiday lets in some parts of East Norfolk, driving up house prices compared to local earnings, challenges in managing empty homes and landlords exiting the private rental market in favour of holiday lets – all placing further pressure on social housing demand and homelessness services, and

a need for an approach to development that places local people at the heart of decision-making. Ensuring residents can live independently as they age in safe and high-quality homes through integration of housing and care pathways will enable more residents to live independently, reducing the requirement for long-term care away from places people know.

The challenges East Norfolk is facing provides a clear mandate for public service reform. By redesigning services to be more preventative in focus, there is scope to reduce dependency and improve outcomes for residents of all ages. With strong communities and local assets to build on, East Norfolk can turn these pressures into progress, enabling resilience and long-term wellbeing for residents.

## 5.2. Overview of the new unitary

East Norfolk will combine national leadership in clean energy and green technologies, with diverse economic, and housing growth opportunities. This will be delivered alongside a focus on community wellbeing and climate resilience, enabling growth that leaves no one behind.

As a unitary, East Norfolk will be empowered to make decisions that are rooted in the unique needs and assets of the area, rather than being diluted within a much larger organisation. Services can be designed around the realities of coastal towns, market towns, suburbs and rural communities, being responsive and effective to individual local needs.

Integrated and aligned pathways within unitary council structures enables earlier intervention and outreach so that residents can access support they need before they present at the front door of the local authority for help. The new unitary will build on the deep local understanding and success in delivering effective frontline services to residents – from responding to homelessness needs to delivering support to shielding cohorts during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach will provide the foundation for joined-up, preventative and person-centred approach to public services, one that gives East Norfolk greater control over its future and delivers better outcomes for its residents.



## 5.2.1. The target operating model

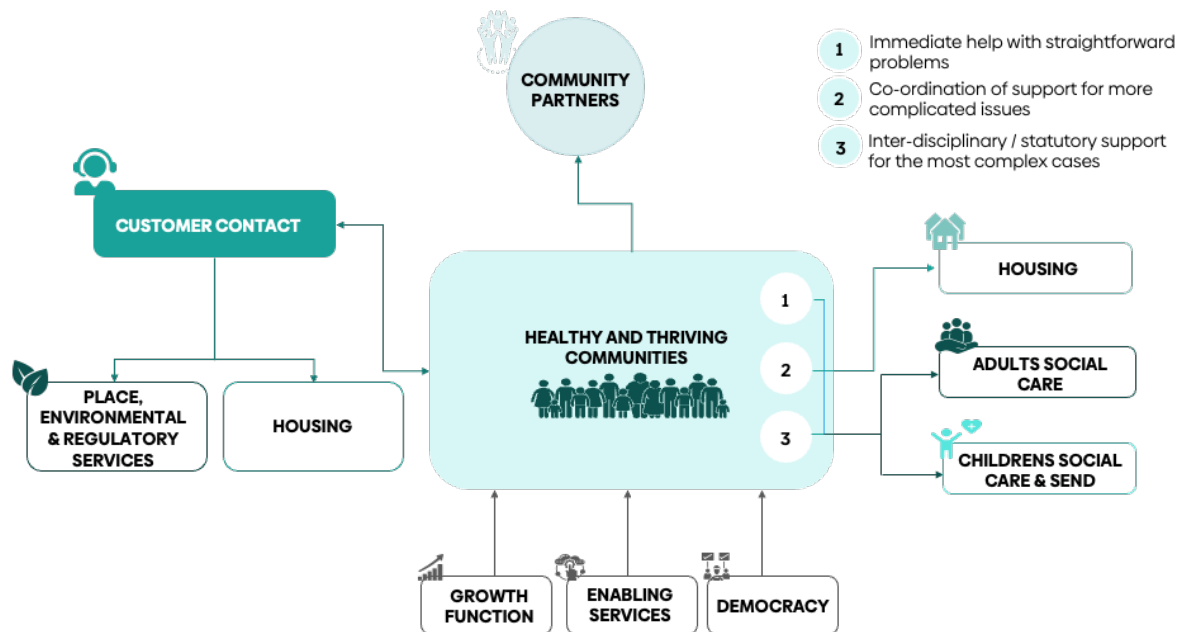


Figure 1: The Target Operating Model

Our vision for public service reform is one that breaks down siloed ways of working, shaping an organisation around the needs of residents, rather than expecting residents to navigate around tiers of government.

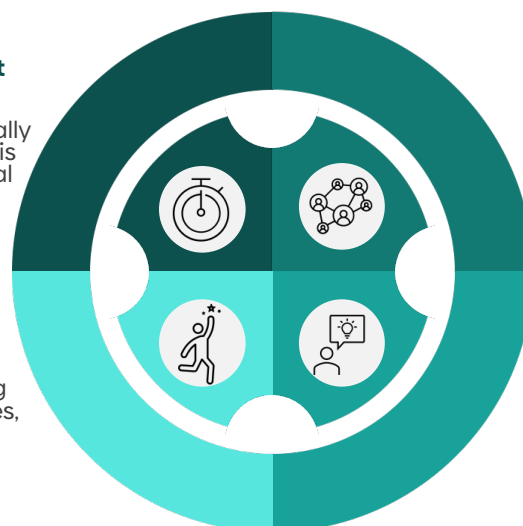
### Design Principles | *With Our Residents*

#### Right Support at the Right Time in the Right Place

Services are provided locally to residents in a way that is proportionate to individual need, reducing long-term demand for services.

#### Enabling Not Duplicating

Support focuses on enabling and empowering residents and communities, rather than providing unnecessary layers of support or repeated interventions.



#### Tell Us Once Service Model

Residents share information once and receive coordinated support through a single data view shared cross services.

#### Experts in Their Own Lives

People are actively engaged in shaping their support and the direction of services that impact them.

Figure 2: Design principles

Full design principles can be found in Appendix J.

The operating models we are proposing for the three unitaries are structurally similar (see Target Operating Model diagram) and rooted in the same design principles, as we believe this is the way to deliver both innovative services and statutory duties. However, their successful implementation is reliant on an approach that deeply understands local needs and is tailored to the specific realities of each area.

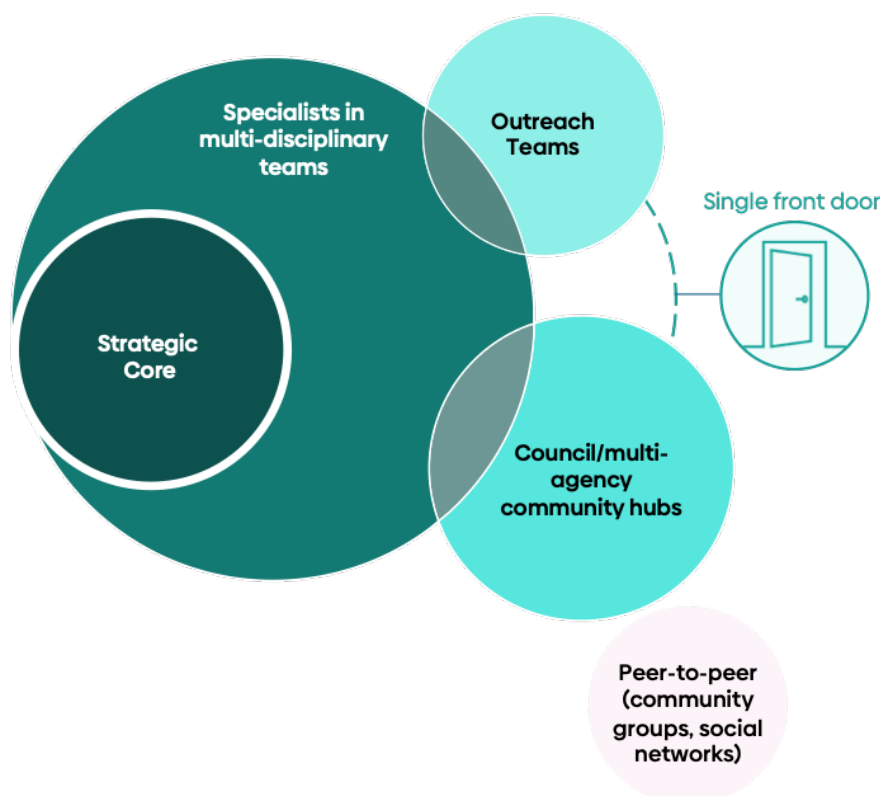
### 5.2.2. Healthy & thriving communities

The early intervention and prevention-led department creates the conditions to fundamentally reshape how residents are supported. In East Norfolk, services such as housing, health, social care, employment, and skills are brought together to work in lockstep with VCSE partners. Support is organised around hubs in places like Great Yarmouth, Cromer, Diss, and Fakenham with mobile teams extending reach into rural and remote areas. This will ensure equitable access to help and support, closing long-standing gaps in healthy life expectancy, housing, and quality of life for those living in deprived and isolated communities.

Support is tailored to East Norfolk's demand pressures, which span the lifelong complex challenges for children and families, rising need among working-age residents, and high levels of frailty among older adults. By embedding services within communities and focusing on resilience from early years through to ageing well, the approach is proactive and accessible, rooted in the realities of coastal and market town life. A "no wrong door" principle will ensure that residents can access timely support in the places they already know and trust, creating the foundations for people to live, work, retire, and age well.

## East Norfolk Healthy & Thriving Communities Department

Operationally, this early intervention and prevention-focused department has 5 functions:



**Strategic Core:** Sets strategic direction and ensures the unitary is outcomes-focused, prevention-led, guided by evidence, effective commissioning, and strong partnerships. Leverages data to spot emerging risks, target investment, and coordinate efforts across the unitary, while tailoring commissioning to the needs of coastal towns, rural villages, and market towns.

**Specialists in multi-disciplinary teams:** Provide targeted expertise in housing options, employment support, safeguarding, domestic abuse, and financial inclusion within collaborative case management. Work alongside universal and community-based staff to ensure timely and appropriate interventions for complex or escalating needs, often acting as case coordinators for those at risk of crisis.

**Outreach Teams:** Bring early intervention directly to those with limited access, especially in rural and coastal areas. Provide home visits, outreach in community venues, and proactive contact with residents at risk of homelessness, unemployment, or social isolation. Identify hidden needs and address them before they escalate.

**Single front door:** A unified access point by phone, online, email for self referral, referral by partners, or resulting from proactive outreach. Handles routine queries, provides low complexity information, assistance, and guidance, and connects residents to the right support or partner. Maintains accessibility for rural residents and those without reliable digital access..

**Council/multi-agency hubs:** Accessible local service points in towns such as Great Yarmouth, Cromer, and South Norfolk, co-locating housing, health, skills, employment, and VCSE services. Offer in person support such as parenting programmes, benefits advice, wellbeing activities, and targeted interventions for at risk groups, delivered by trusted local staff working closely with community partners.

*Figure 3: East Norfolk Healthy & Thriving Communities department*

The Healthy & Thriving Communities department in East Norfolk will operate through five functions that align data, people, and services around residents. Support will be relational and strengths-based, recognising the full picture of housing, work, health, and family life. Multidisciplinary teams will coordinate responses, prevent escalation, and ensure residents only tell their story once. Predictive analytics will guide targeted outreach, identifying people and communities at risk 12–18 months before crisis and enabling early intervention and action, such as debt advice before eviction.

For staff and partners, the model means working in flexible teams with shared data and tools, building trust and reducing duplication. For residents, it means earlier, more connected support that helps them stay well, independent, and economically active. Over time, this will reduce reliance on costly statutory interventions, delivering better outcomes for residents and a more sustainable system in East Norfolk.

An example of what this would look and feel like in practice is set out below:

## Resident Journey | *Healthy & Thriving Communities in action in East Norfolk*

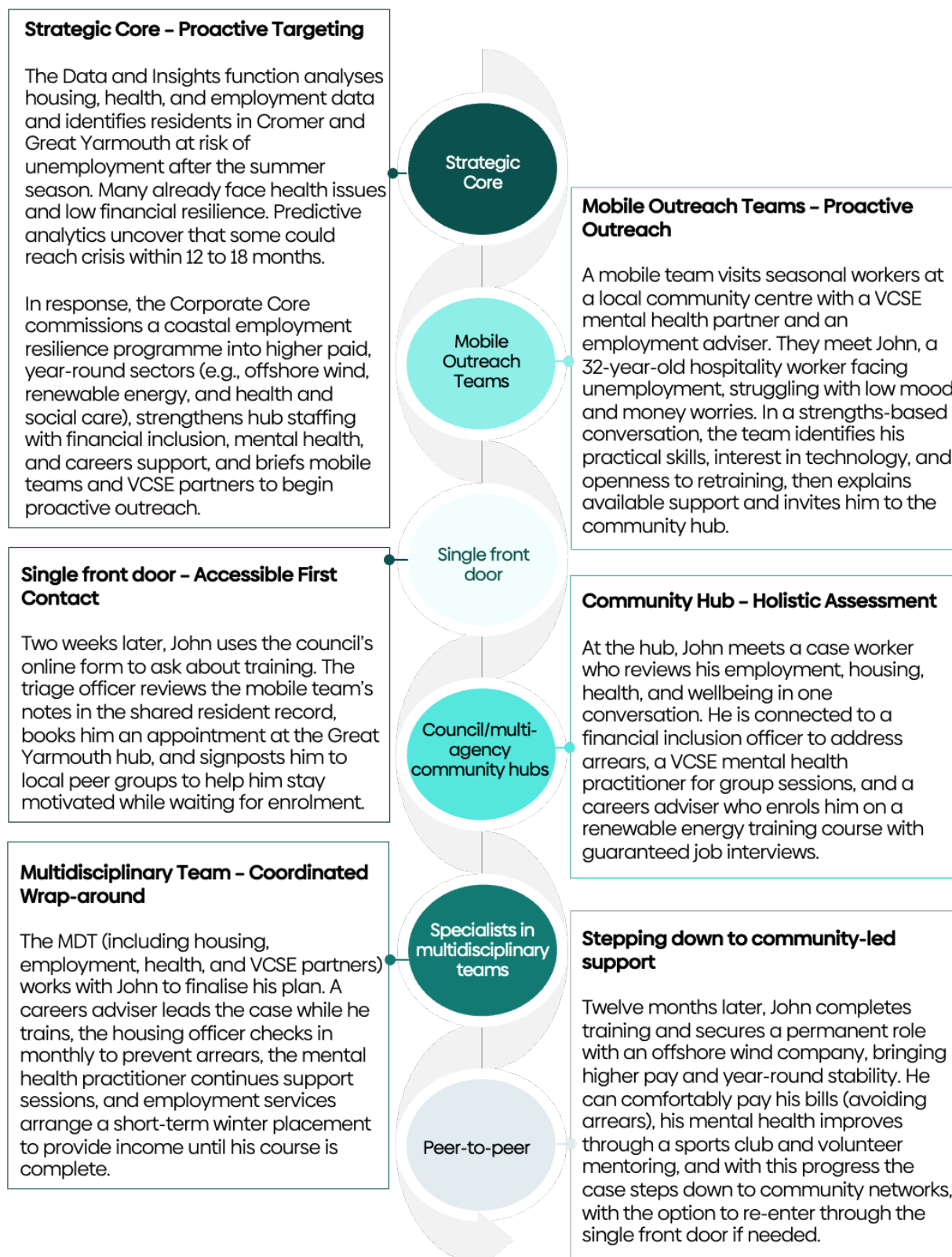


Figure 4: Example East Norfolk resident journey

### 5.2.3. Housing and homelessness

The East Norfolk unitary would bring homelessness and housing together in a prevention focused model within Healthy & Thriving Communities. Social Landlord services/ HRA will continue to be a separate and specialist function. This will enable a focus on:

- Prevention and multi-disciplinary working, with housing officers located in community hubs and mobile outreach teams to reach residents earlier and working in the EIP department to support with the needs assessment and triage processes
- A consistent allocations policy across the unitary, directly allocating homes to best use social stock and ease homelessness pressures
- Promoting access to more quality private sector rentals which in turn will ease homelessness and housing register growth
- An expanded HRA and landlord infrastructure to manage and maintain stock across the unitary.
- Targeted development growth in one-bed and 4+ bed homes, including adapted homes for complex requirements.
- Aligned arm's length development companies to deliver housing that matches EN's needs across the new unitary area.
- Commit the Second Homes Council Tax Premium earned through large numbers of second homes on the provision of social housing investment

These opportunities are only possible through unitarisation, bringing together the scale, data, and decision-making authority needed to design housing solutions that reflect East Norfolk's unique pressures and deliver earlier, more effective support.

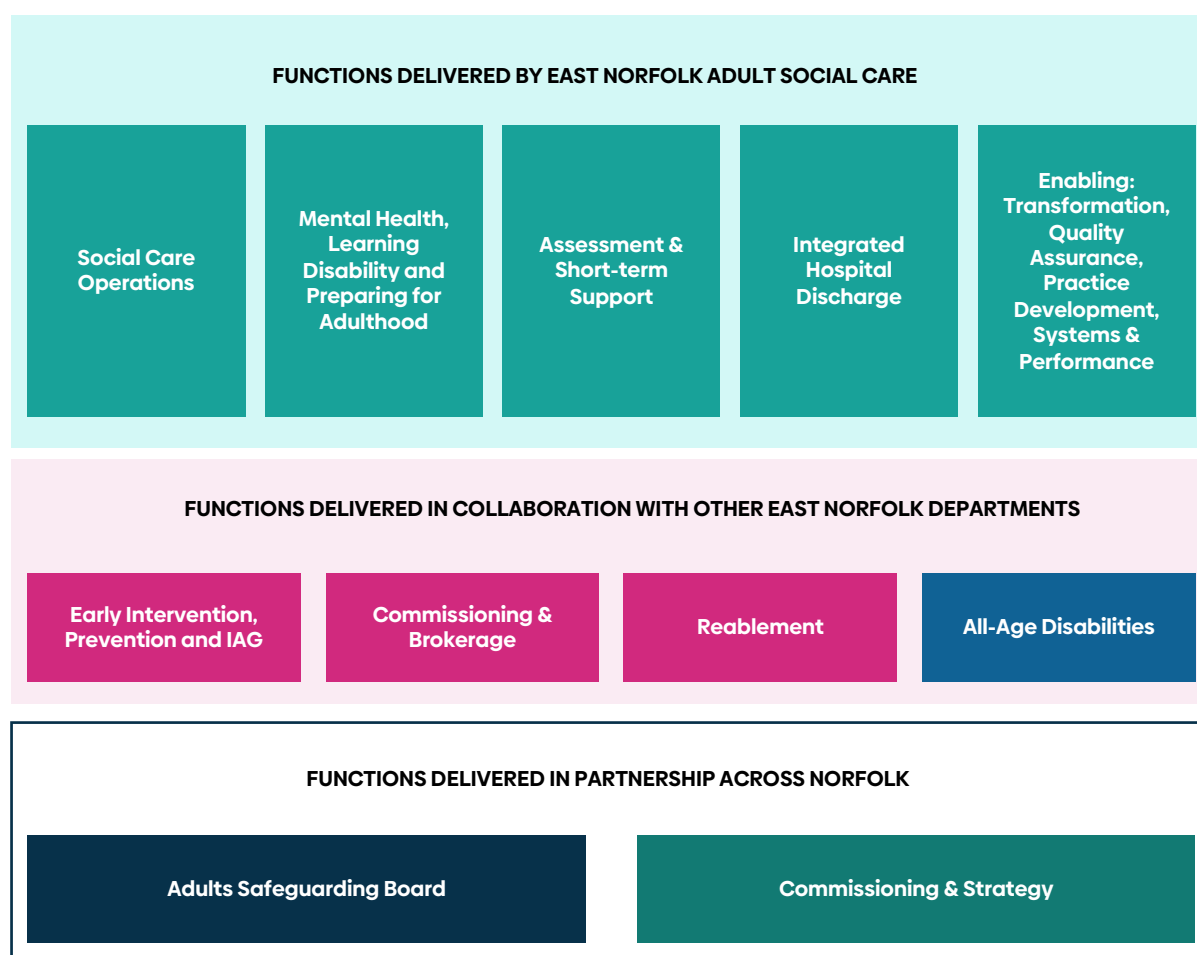
East Norfolk's profile, from deprivation hotspots to rural isolation and coastal market pressures, needs a local, place-based response. The unitary would join up services through early help hubs, outreach, and existing landlord capacity, keeping delivery close to communities and tailored to local markets, while using integration and scale to improve consistency and efficiency.

#### **Building on Success: The Help Hub (South Norfolk & Broadland)**

South Norfolk & Broadland's Help Hub is a multi-agency early intervention model that brings housing, benefits, health, and voluntary sector services together under a "no wrong door" approach, tackling problems well before the statutory prevention duty. By resolving issues such as debt, tenancy sustainment, and wellbeing needs early, it has significantly reduced homelessness rates, improved community outcomes, and delivered measurable cost savings.

## 5.2.4. Adult social care

Given the high numbers of residents of East Norfolk accessing the most acute forms of Adult Social Care, current service delivery is not meeting local needs. Therefore, we believe that East Norfolk should have its own sovereign Adult Social Care department to enable the shaping of service delivery and care and support available in the area. East Norfolk has a large and growing number of older people who to retire to coastal and more rural areas resulting in increasing demand for services for frail elderly people. Our proposed new model will have a greater focus on early intervention and prevention to ensure people can age well and remain as independent as possible for as long as possible, in their own homes. East Norfolk will also shape its future housing strategy to ensure there is appropriate housing particularly in areas such as supported housing and housing with care.



*Figure 5: Functional model of Adult Social Care across the unitary.*

Given East Norfolk covers a large geographical area with a mix of coastal communities and many rural areas, several smaller localised multi-agency networks will need to be established to serve this area. While collaborating with Great Norwich



and West Norfolk to manage the wider market, East Norfolk will have greater flexibility to tailor care delivery locally across larger towns like Great Yarmouth and Wymondham and coastal areas aligned to the specific needs and challenges. Due to the large geographical coverage, many residents of East Norfolk have a greater distance to travel to acute hospitals for condition management. This is a particular challenge in North Norfolk which has a higher number of older people aged 65+ which this new model will support through greater collaboration with health to develop more innovative community-based solutions for older people's health and wellbeing.

This new model will focus on collaboration with the Integrated Care Board to develop hyper-local responses to the unique characteristics and needs in each of these areas to support the wider NHS 10-year plan. The model will develop prevention-first pathways maximising local community provision and coordinated outreach around hospitals to reduce/delay demand for statutory care building on existing assets and established programmes which are delivering better outcomes.

#### **Building on Success: Tackling Social Isolation in Great Yarmouth**

Great Yarmouth have developed localised models for support and commissioned the VCFSE to provide targeted interventions locally to help reduce loneliness and promote people to be more active aligned to the new health neighbourhood model. The impact has been avoiding more costly interventions estimating around 15-20% reduction in costs to support people. These localised initiatives demonstrate the positive impact of joined-up, early help and prevention and show what is possible

Existing county wide partnerships where there is a strong case for continuing (e.g. the Norfolk Adults Safeguarding Board) is something which will be retained to strengthen relationships with statutory and non-statutory organisations and support these through their connection to more localised service delivery models.

The new model builds on local partnerships to strengthen prevention and independence. Working closely with health and hospital partners including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, James Paget Hospital in Great Yarmouth and Norfolk & Norwich Hospital in Norwich, will be key to provide coordinated support and proactive outreach in both primary care in communities and hospital discharge.

A focus on learning disability and an all-age commissioning, care and support service will provide smooth transitions, improve independence, and integrate housing, skills, and employment support. This is vital given East Norfolk's comparatively high numbers of young people receiving support from Children's Social Care in ensuring that only

young people with the most complex needs require long-term care and support from Adult Social Care.

This model restores the primacy of place, delivering person-centred, sustainable Adult Social Care tailored to East Norfolk.

### 5.2.5. Children's social care

With the highest numbers of Children in Care and Children in Need out of the three unitaries, East Norfolk has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reset service delivery and the delivery of care to children, young people and their families – as existing approaches do not appear to be delivering the outcomes that East Norfolk's young people deserve.

The proposed model is embedded in local communities, strengthening prevention and tailoring support close to home. Early intervention and prevention in East Norfolk will focus on supporting household resilience, linking families to housing, employment, debt management and domestic abuse support. Statutory safeguarding responses will be met through an East Norfolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), co-located with colleagues from the police and health. This builds on existing good practice within the county and retains the valued close working with statutory partners, whilst enabling effective triaging and management of cases at a local level. Existing partnership arrangements across the geographic area of Norfolk, including the Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) and Children's Safeguarding Partnership, will be retained ensuring their benefits will still be felt for the people of East Norfolk.

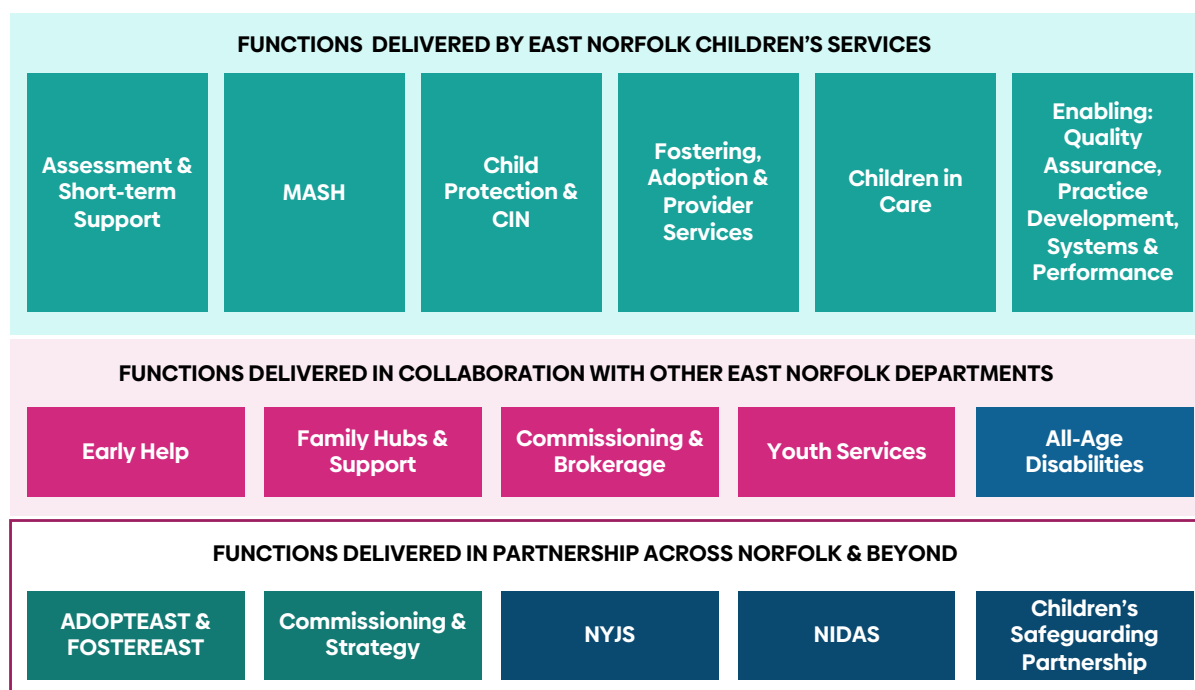


Figure 6: Functional model of Children's Social Care across the unitary.

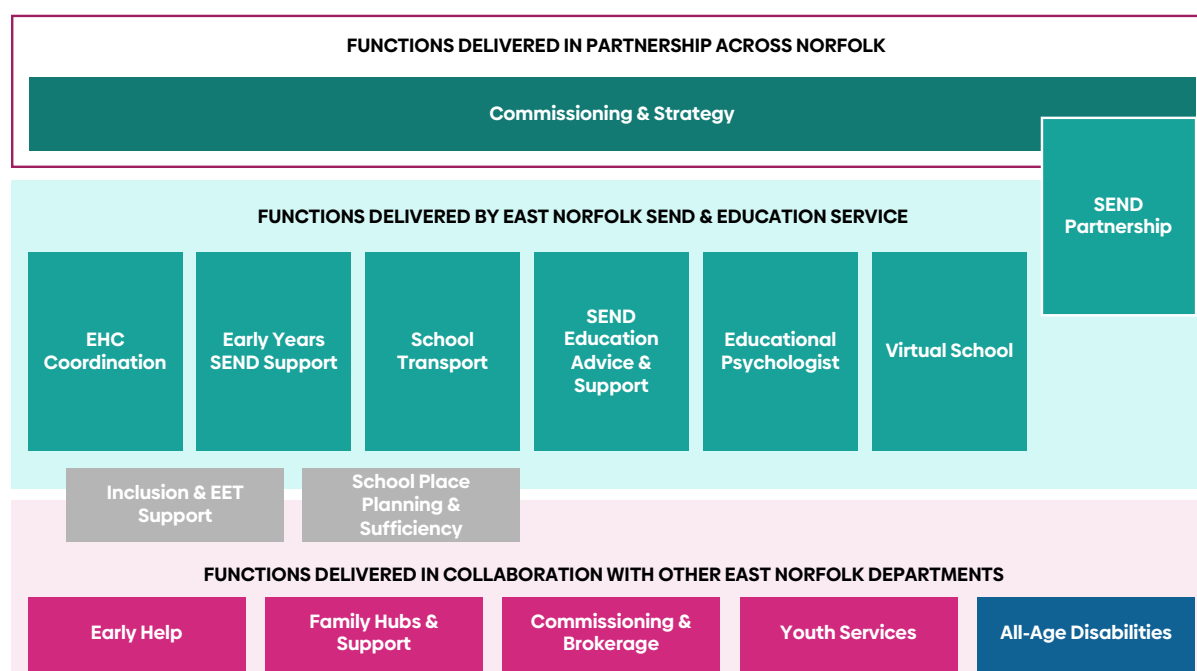
East Norfolk has the highest number of residential care placements, and there is an opportunity within the new unitary to ensure these are genuinely meeting needs and providing value for money – and ensuring an ongoing emphasis on family-based placements wherever possible through continued investment in foster carer recruitment and retention.

There will also be an emphasis on exploring opportunities for reunification, enabling children to return from their care placements to their family homes. This will be delivered in close partnership with the Healthy & Thriving Communities function, ensuring families are enabled to be resilient and welcoming of children to enable them to remain out of the care system. As young people leave care, they will be supported through effective integration with skills and employment pathways and will be connected to opportunities in local growth sectors including construction, engineering and clean energy.

Through effective community-rooted support and strengthened partnerships more sustainable care pathways will be in place to better meet the needs of East Norfolk residents and reduce costs.

## 5.2.6. Education & SEND

To address challenges around inclusion, East Norfolk’s proposed model will be community-rooted focused on delivering local support to strengthen partnerships with schools, families and employment hubs. An Early Intervention offer built around schools, will bring together multi-disciplinary teams to provide holistic support and connect families and young people to wider services.



*Figure 7: Functional model of Education & SEND across the unitary.*

The service will also be closely aligned with the All-Age Disability Service within Adult Social Care, to support transitions into independence and adulthood. Where young people may not meet the statutory thresholds for Adult Social Care, the Healthy & Thriving Communities function will provide community-based support to connect them to peer support, and the wider community offer to enable resilience into adulthood.

Integrated within the service, school transport decisions will be considered alongside SEND case work – in recognition of its impact on independence and costs. Through effective reset relationships with families and the development of a local special school sufficiency strategy, a wider range of travel options will be considered – including personal travel budgets, greater use of shared transport and travel training. The financial benefits unlocked from this approach can then be reinvested to further strengthen early intervention within SEND in East Norfolk.

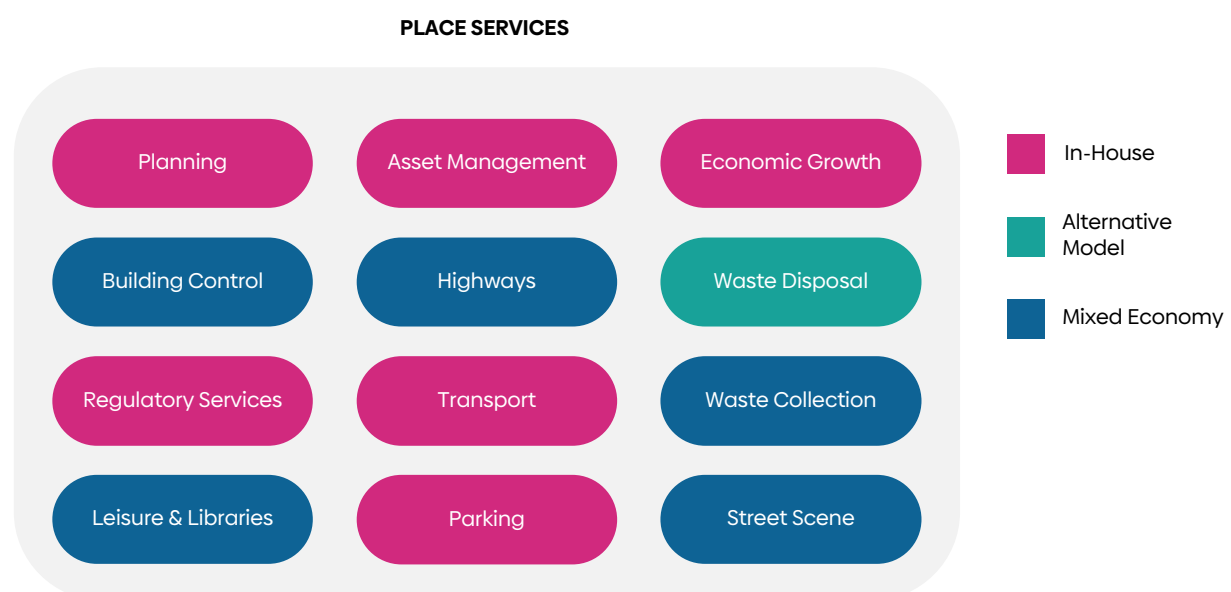
Working with the Economic Growth and wider skills and employment teams will connect young people to opportunities from the 'energy coast' and wider business growth sectors, creating pathways to skills and employment so growth genuinely benefits young people in the area.

Leveraging the experience that East Norfolk has in planning will enable the unitary to better forward plan for education needs, including collaborating with education providers to explore opportunities to expand maintained provision within the unitary area, as well as mainstream education opportunities linked to housing development.

By stepping children down from high-cost placements, reducing exclusions and building family resilience - East Norfolk will have a system that delivers financial benefits and improves outcomes.

### 5.2.7. Place, environmental & regulatory services

East Norfolk will serve urban, market town, rural, and coastal communities with several areas of high landscape designation / protection. Protecting these natural assets and supporting a sustainability agenda will be integral to the new unitary council services. The delivery model is described below, and represents a pragmatic, interim state that factors in contractual constraints while allowing the investment of time in developing and implementing a new model in the longer-term.



*Figure 8: Place Services*

The model brings together all the services that can make a major contribution to create vibrant, healthy, and meaningful places that enhance people's well-being and connection to their community. It may also work closely with existing arm's length companies and joint ventures, including Big Sky Group Ltd, Equinox Enterprises, Equinox Property Holdings and Great Yarmouth Services to shape place<sup>9</sup>. With Greater Norwich taking on a broader area around the city, East Norfolk can now focus on a strategic approach to sustainable development and economic growth in the more rural and coastal areas of the county. There will need to be particular focus on the tourism infrastructure and assets (e.g. seafronts, piers, leisure centres and countryside, amongst others) that help drive the visitor economy, and on coastal protection, which is very important to East Norfolk.

Given the constraints of long-term contracts already in place for waste collection and disposal, street scene and highways, services within Place will be a mixed economy, at least in the short- to medium-term. Although several will be run in-house as standalone services, others will take the form of either shared services, outsourced or a mix of both. Specifically Waste Collection & Disposal, Street Scene, Highways, Building Control, Parking, Leisure and Parks & Green Spaces will be delivered through a combination of in-house services, arm's length companies, shared services and outsourced suppliers.

"Place" will draw upon the existing, successful pan-Norfolk partnerships to deliver recycling and waste transfer stations (via the joint venture Norfolk Environmental Waste Services), shared parking services and CNC Building Control.

"Place" will have the ability to strategically plan and implement transformational change across all its placemaking services. This will take time to properly plan and execute, which works well with some of the long-term contractual commitments that it will inherit.

Adopting this Place model whereby all environmental and place-based services can collaborate closely will enable East Norfolk to develop a stronger and more joined up approach to making neighbourhoods and the wider area excellent places for residents, communities and visitors to enjoy. It will further strengthen the tourism economy and employment opportunities, whilst addressing challenges such as promoting sustainable development in the area.

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<sup>9</sup> Pending any review of these arm's length bodies

## Transformation and optimisation of place-based services

East Norfolk's character and quality is intrinsic to its 'offer' to residents and visitors, attracting and retaining people and investment and underpinning a diverse, high-value tourism economy. Discretionary council spend on place-based and place-focused services is, therefore, important – the operation, cleansing and maintenance of public and green spaces, concessions, leisure and wellbeing facilities, beach equipment and infrastructure – alongside major heritage and culture attractions such as Great Yarmouth's landmark Waterways and Cromer's historic pier. In addition, the existing council's commission or provide a range of enabling services – for example, car parking and public toilets.

Whilst some tourism and cultural infrastructure is revenue-generating – for example, lease income and car parking – there are competing priorities for discretionary expenditure and sustained funding for these services is increasingly challenging. Unitarisation presents significant collaborative opportunities for the co-ordination and transformation of place-based services across the wider East area – streamlining and consolidating coverage and contracting in areas like grounds maintenance and highways, estates and asset management.

### 5.2.8. Growth

East Norfolk has a crucial role to play in fostering growth. It will need to deliver support that will help sustain the important tourism economy, accelerate its expanding clean energy sector and foster growth and entrepreneurship amongst its high number of SMEs.

Any ecosystem of support to help grow the local (and regional) economy will need to span all future levels of government. This includes local initiatives (such as Business Improvement Districts and town centre regeneration schemes, growth programmes and skills support), services delivered by the unitaries, regional programmes (that will likely be delivered by a Mayoral Combined Authority) and national partnerships (such as Innovate UK).

East Norfolk would also need to work closely with partners to remove barriers and create an environment that fosters business growth. There are opportunities to



support this through better use of data and having a shared picture of local businesses that the council engages with (e.g. shared Customer Relationship Management).

East Norfolk would complement the MCA with an appropriately scaled tailored approach, responsive to local needs and alive to local opportunities. For example, it would focus on support to local micro businesses and SMEs, which constitute a significant portion of the economy, as well as addressing skills mismatches that could constrain growth in its emerging clean energy sectors, and growth of sector specific clusters (e.g. energy, culture, etc.). It would also work closely with its joint ventures Equinox Enterprises, Equinox Property Holdings and Big Sky Living to address affordable housing shortages. East Norfolk would seek to maximise brownfield development and seek opportunities for new housing growth to be accommodated alongside established market and coastal towns. These are places where health and education facilities already exist, with some existing capacity to accommodate growth and with established public transport services and infrastructure.

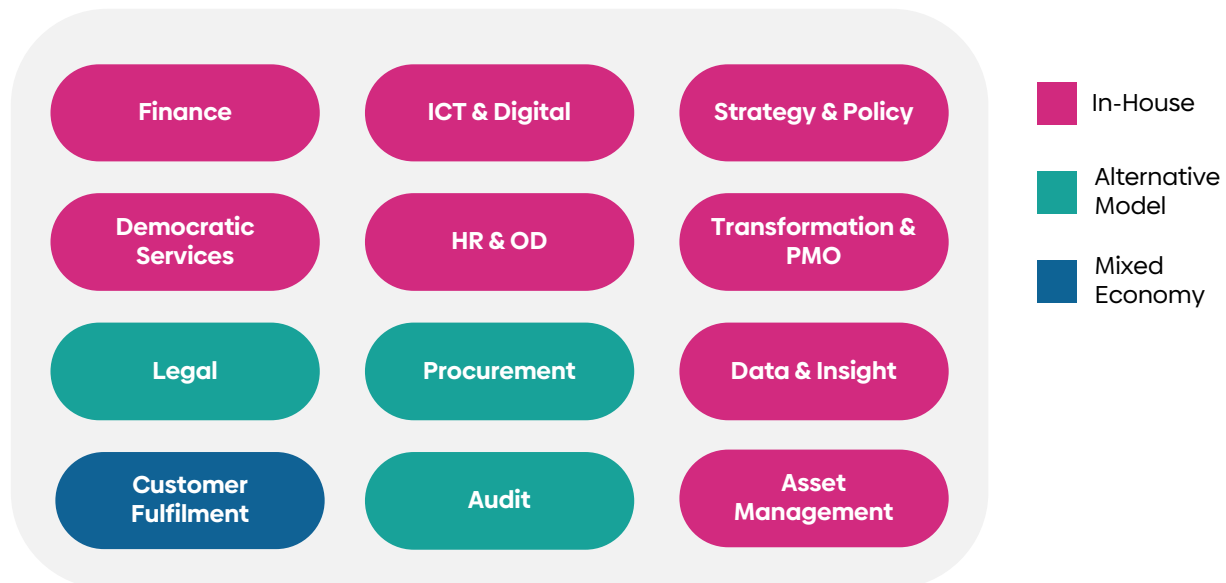
In the longer term, once any Mayoral Combined Authority is established, new unitary councils might wish to explore the opportunities to work closely in partnership and pool resources to deliver regional inclusive growth for Norfolk and Suffolk. However, this would be after vesting day and once the priorities of the Mayoral Combined Authority were agreed.

In the context of East Norfolk, we believe that there will be opportunities to share some work with East Suffolk around clean energy developments, coastal management and coastal adaptation.

### 5.2.9. Enabling services

East Norfolk will have a core of enabling services that are set up to provide the right support to the wider organisation. The diagram below shows what enabling services it will run and what models will be adopted.

## ENABLING SERVICES



*Figure 9: Enabling Services*

Enabling Services are either centralised (e.g. HR & OD, Finance) or adopt a hub and spoke model (Transformation & PMO, Data & Insight<sup>10</sup>) as a means of keeping control of enabling support and maintaining a resilient, flexible resource whilst also fostering a community of practice and common standards across the organisation.

Wherever possible enabling services will be delivered in-house as standalone functions to maximise control and flexibility to evolve as the council's needs change over time. However, there are some exceptions where a mix of models is currently in place, including Legal, Procurement, Audit and Customer Services (where some elements of Waste customer contact is delivered by suppliers).

The services would seek to continue the best practice from the existing services within councils, whilst also using the redesign of enabling functions as an opportunity to innovate. Although there are opportunities to realise efficiencies from moving to a unitary council model, it is important to make sure enabling services retain the capacity to support the new council in delivering an ambitious innovation programme through the implementation of LGR to realise the wider benefits for residents and communities.

Enabling services will be set up to support the unique requirements of East Norfolk. For example, Asset Management will include specific capability to support management

<sup>10</sup> Separate to any EI&P / Healthy & Thriving function, but the two will work together

of its extensive portfolio of coastal and tourism assets including coast defences, piers and seaside amenities.

There are further longer-term opportunities for East Norfolk to collaborate with the two other proposed Norfolk unitaries, where it makes sense to pool resources, they share the same needs and can benefit from economies of scale or increased purchasing power (for example procuring joint ICT systems or expertise and audit services). These will be explored as part of the transition so that we can build these into the future design of services.

The enabling services model will set up East Norfolk to be in the best possible position to deliver high quality services whilst also driving transformation and public sector reform that will improve outcomes for residents and communities whilst helping to close the budget gap.

## 6. Financial resilience

The proposed East Norfolk unitary would combine the existing districts of Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk, 30% of Broadland, and 66% of South Norfolk into a single authority. If East Norfolk were a unitary today, it would have a financially resilient position with a small surplus of c.£3m on a £657m budget. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) requires c.£32m of one-off transition costs, but these are capable of being fully funded from local reserves and assets. The programme delivers recurring savings of around £19m a year from Year 4 onwards, generating a cumulative benefit of nearly £90m by Year 8. In the long term, East Norfolk sustains recurring surpluses, underpinned by structural efficiencies and a strong tax base, positioning it to deliver financially sustainable services across its diverse communities.

East Norfolk is distinctive in its composition. It encompasses two coastal districts—Great Yarmouth Borough Council and North Norfolk District Council—both of which face significant challenges linked to urban deprivation, rural isolation, loss of services, seasonal economies, an ageing population, spend on discretionary services which underpin the local economy (coastal assets, Blue Flag beaches, public conveniences) and climate change risks such as coastal erosion and flooding. Alongside these sit parts of Broadland and South Norfolk, bringing in more market towns and rural communities. This mix of coastal deprivation, dispersed rurality, and varied economic drivers provides context to the financial challenges facing the authority.

This section focuses on the financial resilience and viability of East Norfolk. It examines expenditure patterns, income generation, council tax harmonisation, and the balance sheet, before assessing the authority's ability to withstand financial shocks and deliver sustainable services over time.

### 6.1. Baseline financial position

Building on the methodology set out in the main report, we have drawn on the 2025/26 Revenue Account (RA) returns to model the funding and expenditure profile of a prospective East Norfolk unitary authority. This analysis provides the following indicative baseline position:

£m (2025/26)	East Norfolk
Revenue Expenditure	657.42
Revenue Income	(660.60)
Net Position	+3.18

*Table 2: Indicative baseline position for East Norfolk*

East Norfolk enters reorganisation with forecast income slightly exceeding expenditure, producing a modest £3.2m surplus in 2025/26. While relatively small in the context of its £657m budget, this positive position offers a degree of flexibility at the outset and avoids the immediate need for corrective savings. The challenge will be to sustain this balance over time as demand and cost pressures continue to grow.

## Expenditure Profile

The starting point was the aggregation of the RA 2025/26 data across all eight existing Norfolk councils. From there, allocations for the largest service blocks – Adults, Children’s, and Education – were derived using demand, capacity, and unit cost data provided by the County Council at LSOA level. While this dataset was incomplete and inconsistent, it allowed us to map demand patterns against the new East Norfolk boundaries and to allocate expenditure accordingly.

The analysis highlights that East Norfolk faces the highest adult social care demand and cost pressures of the three proposed unitaries. It records the highest overall demand for residential care, accounting for 42% of Norfolk’s requirement for older adults – more than double Greater Norwich’s share. It also registers the highest demand for working-age residential placements and the highest demand for domiciliary care across both working-age and older adults. Nursing care demand sits in the middle range, but East Norfolk’s unit costs for residential and nursing care are the highest in the county, with residential care costs particularly standing out above the other two proposed unitaries.

This combination of higher demand and higher unit costs drives a disproportionate share of Norfolk’s adult social care spending into East Norfolk. The area absorbs 40% of total adult social care costs and records the highest spend per head at £527.74, significantly above Greater Norwich (£421.39) and West Norfolk (£479.53). Children’s Services add a further layer of pressure. East Norfolk records the highest costs for residential placements and fostering, giving it the highest overall spend on children’s services of the three proposed unitaries.

Education demand also runs higher in East Norfolk than elsewhere. It has the largest number of primary and secondary school-aged children in Norfolk, coupled with the highest total number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Interestingly, it records the lowest number of 16+ pupils, but overall East Norfolk still carries the largest school-aged population of the three unitaries, and therefore the highest education expenditure allocation.

Taken together, these demand and cost patterns mean East Norfolk emerges with the highest overall expenditure profile of the three proposed unitaries. Its costs are structurally driven by high demand and high unit prices in both adults' and children's social care, alongside a large school-aged population with elevated levels of need associated with urban and rural deprivation. This creates a baseline position that is considerably more challenging than that faced by Greater Norwich or West Norfolk.

## Funding Profile

East Norfolk's income base is drawn from the standard sources available to all local authorities: council tax, business rates, central government grants (both general and service-specific), and a range of fees, charges and other locally generated income. To establish the likely funding position, we obtained the RA 2025/26 submissions for all eight existing Norfolk councils. County-level income lines—particularly those relating to Aggregate External Finance (AEF)—were further broken down: demand-led grants such as schools funding and social care allocations were apportioned using the expenditure modelling outlined in the previous section, while more general grants were distributed by population or, where appropriate, deprivation indicators.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG) was a particular focus of our modelling. Although no longer a dominant source of local government funding, RSG remains an important part of the overall settlement and is expected to be influenced by the Government's proposed Fair Funding 2.0 reforms. These reforms are intended to better reflect local needs by taking deprivation into account and supporting councils with historically weaker tax bases.

Deprivation within East Norfolk is highly uneven. For example, some urban wards within Great Yarmouth Borough Council are amongst the most deprived districts in England, with 21 out of the town's 62 neighbourhoods ranked among the 20% most income-deprived in the country—and 18.66% of local areas falling within the 10% most deprived nationally. At the other end of the spectrum, Broadland is among the least deprived districts in the country, ranking in the top 20% nationally, with no neighbourhoods in the most deprived decile and very few residents living in deprivation. North Norfolk also

records very low deprivation, with no LSOAs in the bottom 10% nationally, while the majority of South Norfolk sits in the upper middle range, with very few areas in significant deprivation.

Taken together, this produces a mixed profile: East Norfolk has pockets of extreme deprivation concentrated in Great Yarmouth but balanced by relatively affluent and low-need areas in Broadland, North Norfolk and South Norfolk. This places East Norfolk in the middle range of the three proposed unitaries: 13% of its LSOAs are highly deprived (compared with 21% in Greater Norwich and 11% in West Norfolk), but overall, it contains around one-third of Norfolk's deprived neighbourhoods. On this basis, East Norfolk received a middle share of RSG in our allocation.

East Norfolk secures the largest share of business rates income among the three proposed unitaries, accounting for around 36% of Norfolk's overall National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) under our apportionment method. District-level income was allocated on a district basis, with Broadland and South Norfolk split using Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) data provided by finance officers, and the county share distributed on a population basis following officer discussions. While this gives East Norfolk a comparatively strong position at the outset, the forthcoming reset of the Business Rates Retention system means that current allocations are unlikely to provide a reliable guide to future funding, with deprivation expected to play a more prominent role in the formula.

Overall, East Norfolk begins from the strongest tax base of the three unitaries, giving it a clear advantage in locally raised income. At the same time, deprivation will continue to play a central role in shaping government support, meaning East Norfolk's financial outlook will ultimately depend on the balance struck in future national funding reforms.

## Core Spending Power

Core Spending Power (CSP) provides the clearest measure of the resources available to local authorities to deliver services. It combines income from the Settlement Funding Assessment, council tax, and central government grants, as set out in the Local Government Finance Settlement.

On this measure, East Norfolk records the highest CSP of the three proposed unitaries. This stems from its comparatively large tax base – the strongest of the three – which enables greater income generation through council tax, as well as a steady contribution from business rates. While East Norfolk does not attract as much Revenue Support Grant as Greater Norwich, its deprivation profile is still significant enough to secure a higher share than West Norfolk.



The result is that East Norfolk begins from a stronger financial footing than either of its counterparts, with greater resources available both in absolute terms and per head. CSP therefore underlines East Norfolk's relative advantage: a broad and resilient income base, supplemented by targeted grant funding, that places it in a more sustainable starting position. Its challenge will be to ensure that these resources are managed effectively against the backdrop of high demand pressures, particularly in adult and children's social care.

## 6.2. Council tax harmonisation

A key financial consideration for East Norfolk is the variation in council tax levels inherited from its constituent districts. In 2025/26, Broadland has the lowest Band D in the unitary area at £134.91, with a tax base of 49,789. Great Yarmouth Borough Council shows the highest Band D at £192.49, though it has the smallest tax base at 31,567. South Norfolk (£175.14) and North Norfolk (£173.52) both sit in the middle range, with South Norfolk's tax base of 54,097 notably larger than North Norfolk's 45,024.

2025/26		
Local Authority	Band D	Tax Base
South Norfolk	175.00	54,097
Broadland	134.91	49,789
North Norfolk	173.52	45,024
Great Yarmouth	192.49	31,567
Norfolk County Council	1,755.63	324,009

*Table 3: East Norfolk district councils Band D and Tax Base 2025/26*

The council tax position in East Norfolk reflects a mix of contrasting starting points. Great Yarmouth Borough Council has the highest Band D level but the smallest tax base, limiting the overall scale of its revenues. By contrast, South Norfolk and Broadland both have much larger tax bases, though their mid-to-lower Band D levels moderate the yield. Of these, only 28% of Broadland District Council's base and 66% of South Norfolk Council's transfer into East. North Norfolk District Council sits between these positions, with a mid-range Band D and a smaller but still significant base. Taken together, East Norfolk enters the reorganisation with the strongest overall council tax revenues of the three proposed unitaries.

Our harmonisation modelling explored five different approaches to aligning council tax rates across the new unitary over a ten-year horizon (2025/26 to 2035/36). The results show that outcomes vary significantly depending on the chosen methodology.

Importantly, this analysis does not make a recommendation. The five scenarios presented are intended to illustrate a range of legally compliant options and their potential fiscal impact. It will be for each shadow authority, once established, to determine its preferred approach to harmonisation based on its local context, policy priorities, and political judgement.

## Results for East Norfolk:

Scenario	Net Revenue Gain Compared to Baseline (£m)
Low to Max	-90.37
High to Min	-166.68
Weighted Average (Day 1)	-114.78
Weighted Average + 5% (Day 1)	21.69
Fastest Harmonisation (5% Cap)	-32.81

*Table 4: East Norfolk Council Tax Harmonisation Results*

East Norfolk inherits relatively strong tax bases and higher Band D levels, but most harmonisation scenarios still result in income foregone compared to the baseline. The only exception is the Weighted Average +5% scenario, which sets Band D at the maximum allowable level from day one and delivers sustained gains through 2035/36.

To illustrate what each scenario would mean for residents, we modelled the change in Band D charges under each scenario. These can be found in the Appendix.

## Conclusion

Overall, East Norfolk enters reorganisation from a relatively strong financial starting position, with higher Band D levels and solid tax bases compared to other parts of the county. However, harmonisation outcomes diverge sharply depending on the chosen methodology. Most scenarios reduce revenues against the baseline, often by significant margins, with the exception of the *Weighted Average +5%* model, which generates sustained gains but at the cost of steeper upfront rises for households. The comparison with single- and two-unitary options underlines the sensitivity of results to where the 5% cap is applied, reinforcing that distributional impacts across districts vary as much as the aggregate financial outcomes.

## 6.3. Building an organisation fit for the future

For East Norfolk, the move to unitary status offers the chance to bring coherence to services across a diverse mix of coastal, rural, and suburban communities. With the largest overall population and tax base of the three proposed authorities, East begins from a position of relative financial strength. But this scale also brings higher demand pressures – from concentrated deprivation in Great Yarmouth to dispersed service needs in North and South Norfolk – which must be managed efficiently if the authority is to remain sustainable.

The task for East Norfolk is therefore less about survival and more about optimisation: reducing duplication, building a single prevention-led system, and using its stronger fiscal base to invest in predictive, early-intervention models that cut long-term costs. Done well, the transition can both contain expenditure and embed a more resilient, prevention-first approach across the county's most populous unitary.

Year	Financial Year	One-Off Costs	Recurring Costs	Recurring Savings	Net Impact	Cumulative Net Impact
0	2026/27–2027/28	-11	-0	0	-11	-11
1	2028/29	-6	-2	6	-2	-14
2	2029/30	-9	-2	12	-1	-13
3	2030/31	-5	-2	17	10	-2
4	2031/32	-1	-2	19	16	14
5	2032/33	0.0	-2	20	18	31
6	2033/34	0.0	-2	21	19	50
7	2034/35	0.0	-2	21	19	69
8	2035/36	0.0	-2	21	19	88

Table 5: Eight Year Profile of Savings and Costs of Transition (£ms)

### Transition Costs & Savings

East Norfolk faces around £32m in one-off transition costs across the pre-vesting period and the first three years of operation. These cover shadow authority set-up, ICT migration, and workforce restructuring. Alongside this, a permanent £2m recurring annual cost arises from the disaggregation of county-wide services.

As with other proposed unitaries, it is assumed that these one-off costs will be funded locally through reserves and realisable assets. It is believed that East Norfolk has sufficient capacity to cover this requirement without central government support, although caution is needed where some commercial assets are concerned, given their role in generating ongoing revenue.

Savings build gradually but become significant from Year 2. In Year 1 (2028/29), efficiencies of £6m are realised, leaving a net deficit of £2m. By Year 2 (2029/30), savings rise to £12m, but with £11m of costs the year still closes in a small deficit of £1m. In Year 3 (2030/31), structural savings grow to £17m, delivering an annual surplus of £10m.

The payback point is reached in Year 4 (2031/32), when cumulative savings overtake upfront costs and generate a positive net impact of £16m, moving the cumulative position to around £14m in the black. From that point onwards, East Norfolk sustains recurring surpluses of around £18–19m annually. By Year 8 (2035/36), the cumulative net benefit reaches approximately £88m.

These gains are achieved through workforce consolidation, ICT and systems integration, and prevention-led service reform. While disaggregation costs remain a permanent feature, they are modest compared to the efficiencies secured.

### Strategic Conclusion

<b>Costs</b>	
Total one-off investment	£32m
Recurring additional costs	£2m
<b>Benefits</b>	
Total recurring savings	£21m (by 33/34)
Cumulative savings (over 8 year period)	£88m
<b>Net position</b>	
Net financial impact	£88m
Break-even point	Year 4 (31/32)

*Table 6: Summary of the financial implications for unitarisation and public sector reform of the proposal*

For East Norfolk, the transition requires only two years of deficits before generating sustained annual surpluses. By Year 4, cumulative payback is achieved, and by Year 8 the authority has delivered a cumulative gain of around £88m. With transition fully funded from local sources rather than central government support, East Norfolk is positioned to consolidate efficiencies, strengthen its fiscal base, and reinvest in service transformation. This provides confidence that reorganisation can be delivered sustainably while building capacity to manage long-term demand pressures.

## 6.4. The balance sheet

A local authority's balance sheet is a critical measure of its overall financial health and resilience. A strong balance sheet provides stability, enabling councils to invest in infrastructure, manage risk, and respond to shocks without jeopardising service delivery. Conversely, a weak or overextended balance sheet can leave authorities vulnerable, forcing difficult choices about borrowing, asset sales, or service reductions.

In the context of local government reorganisation, balance sheets take on added significance. The process of balance sheet disaggregation – that is, unpicking the existing county and district-level assets, liabilities, and reserves and reallocating them to the new unitary bodies – will shape the starting financial position of each authority. Decisions about how debt, pension liabilities, cash reserves, and fixed assets are split will directly affect each unitary’s capacity to invest, its exposure to risk, and the sustainability of its financial strategy.

While our intention was to build a robust and detailed understanding of the balance sheet position for each of the proposed unitary authorities, we could not do so in practice. The County Council provided limited data on assets, liabilities, and reserves, despite repeated requests. Without this information, it was not possible to model balance sheet disaggregation at the level of rigour we had originally planned.

In the absence of a full dataset, we adopted a pragmatic approach by applying population-based splits to approximate the distribution of county-level balance sheet items across the proposed unitaries. While this method offers a broad indication of scale, it does not capture the geographic variation in asset holdings, service liabilities, or borrowing commitments that would ultimately influence the financial resilience of each new authority.

This limitation should therefore be borne in mind when interpreting the results: the figures presented provide a high-level view rather than a definitive statement of the future balance sheet positions.

### East Norfolk Indicative Position (2028/29)

(£000s)	Amount
<b>General Fund Unearmarked Reserves</b>	20,730
<b>General Fund Earmarked Reserves</b>	80,228
<b>Long-Term Borrowing*</b>	485,821
<b>Short-Term Borrowing*</b>	68,842
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>	1,380,595

*Table 7: East Norfolk Indicative Position (2028/29)*




*\*Includes HRA borrowing*

To aid understanding of the balance sheet position, we have devised five key financial performance indicators tailored to a local authority context. These indicators move

beyond the headline numbers to present a richer picture of financial resilience and sustainability. Each indicator is supported by a RAG rating framework, with thresholds informed by literature reviews and recognised best practice. Sources are cited under each indicator. To ensure comparability, the figures used throughout are based on the 2028/29 financial year.

### Indicator: Unearmarked Reserves as % of Net Revenue Expenditure

- **What it is:** This indicator assesses the proportion of unearmarked (unrestricted) general fund reserves a council holds, expressed as a percentage of its annual net revenue expenditure. It represents the level of financial flexibility the authority has to absorb unexpected pressures.
- **Why it matters:** Unearmarked reserves are the council's most accessible form of financial resilience. They provide a vital buffer against unforeseen events such as sudden drops in income, spikes in demand for services, or inflationary cost increases. A low level of reserves exposes the authority to greater risk of financial instability and can limit its ability to respond effectively to shocks. Maintaining a robust reserve position is therefore widely recognised as fundamental to good financial management.

Rating	Threshold
 <b>Green</b>	Greater than 10%
 <b>Amber</b>	Between 5% and 10%
 <b>Red</b>	Less than 5%

*Table 8: Thresholds for ratings for unearmarked reserves as % of net revenue expenditure*




**Sources:** [CIPFA Briefing – Resilience in Local Authorities](#)

### Finding for East Norfolk: 4% – Red

At 4%, East Norfolk sits below the prudent threshold, giving it very limited flexibility to manage unforeseen financial shocks. While the authority may be able to absorb a small, one-off pressure, it lacks the resilience to cope with sustained or multiple challenges without taking rapid corrective action, such as drawing on earmarked reserves, cutting services, or seeking external support.

## Indicator: Debt Per Capita

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the total level of long- and short-term borrowing held by a council, divided by the population of the prospective unitary authority. It reflects the notional share of debt attributable to each resident. \*This includes HRA borrowing.
- **Why it matters:** Debt per capita provides insight into the financial burden being carried on a per-person basis. While borrowing can be an entirely legitimate tool to fund long-term capital investment, higher levels of debt can constrain future financial flexibility. They also bring ongoing obligations in the form of interest payments and repayment costs, which reduce the resources available for frontline services.

Rating	Threshold
 <b>Green</b>	Less than £1,000
 <b>Amber</b>	Between £1,000 and £2,000
 <b>Red</b>	More than £2,000

*Table 9: Thresholds for ratings for debt per capita*

**Sources:** [NAO report on financial sustainability of local authorities](#) – emphasises affordability relative to taxpayer base




## Finding for East Norfolk: £1,648 – Amber

At £1,648 per resident, East Norfolk sits comfortably within the amber range. This level of debt suggests that while the authority is not overextended, it does carry a moderate borrowing burden relative to its population. The commitment of resources to debt servicing will need to be managed carefully, but it does not present an immediate risk to financial sustainability.

## Indicator: Debt to Non-Current Assets

- **What this is:** This indicator assesses the proportion of a council's non-current asset base that is funded through borrowing. It is calculated by dividing forecast long- and short-term debt by a forecast of non-current assets. The result provides insight into the council's financial leverage and balance sheet resilience.
- **Why it matters:** A higher debt-to-asset ratio indicates greater reliance on borrowing to support the council's financial position, potentially signalling

reduced flexibility and increased vulnerability during periods of financial stress. A lower ratio suggests more conservative borrowing practices and a stronger, more resilient balance sheet.

Rating	Threshold
 <b>Green</b>	Less than 30%
 <b>Amber</b>	Between 30% and 50%
 <b>Red</b>	More than 50%

*Table 10: Thresholds for ratings for debt to total assets*




**Sources:** [CIPFA Capital Risks Metrics](#), [CIPFA Advisory Note: Reinforcing Good Practice in External Borrowing](#), [NAO \(2016\) Financial Sustainability of Local Authorities](#)

### Finding for East Norfolk: 40% – **Amber**

At 40%, East Norfolk sits within the amber threshold, indicating a moderate reliance on borrowing relative to its asset base. While this level does not suggest immediate financial stress, it highlights the need for careful monitoring to ensure that borrowing remains sustainable and that debt servicing does not restrict flexibility in future years.

### Indicator: Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the ratio of a council's total long- and short-term borrowing to its annual income from council tax. It provides a perspective on how much debt the council is carrying relative to one of its most reliable and locally controlled sources of revenue.
- **Why it matters:** Council tax represents a stable, recurring income stream that underpins financial resilience. A high debt-to-council tax revenue ratio can signal affordability risks, as more of the council's core income would need to be diverted to service debt, leaving less available for frontline services. A lower ratio indicates that the council's debt levels are more proportionate to its recurring revenue base, suggesting stronger affordability and sustainability.

Rating	Threshold
 <b>Green</b>	Less than 2x
 <b>Amber</b>	Between 2x and 3x
 <b>Red</b>	More than 3x

*Table 11: Thresholds for Debt to Annual Council Tax Revenue*



**Sources:** [Room 151 – is local government debt trajectory sustainable?, Woking Case Study](#)

### Finding for East Norfolk: 1.92x – ● Green

At 1.92 times annual council tax revenue, East Norfolk sits within the green threshold. This indicates that the authority's debt levels are proportionate to its most dependable revenue source and remain affordable. While ongoing vigilance is still required to ensure debt servicing does not erode future flexibility, the ratio suggests East Norfolk is well within prudent levels compared with sector benchmarks. This scenario assumes council tax harmonisation to the highest-yielding model for 2028/29, in this case the Weighted Average + 5% approach, which strengthens the recurring revenue base against which debt is assessed.

### Annual Revenue Costs of Debt as % of Net Revenue Budget

- **What it is:** This indicator measures the proportion of a council's net revenue budget spent on servicing debt, including both interest payments and statutory repayments of principal (Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP).
- **Why it matters:** Debt servicing competes directly with frontline spending. As a greater share of the revenue budget is absorbed by debt costs, the council has less flexibility to respond to financial pressures or to invest in services. A lower proportion signals stronger affordability and resilience, whereas higher levels can point to potential sustainability challenges, particularly if income growth is weak or further borrowing is required.

Rating	Threshold
● Green	Less than 5%
● Amber	Between 5% and 10%
● Red	More than 10%

*Table 12: Thresholds for Annual Revenue Costs of Debt (as % of Net Revenue Budget)*

**Sources:** [The Times – Warning of more council bankruptcies as debt doubles](#)

### Finding for East Norfolk: 3% – ● Green

At just 3% of net revenue budget in 2028/29, East Norfolk's debt servicing burden is firmly within the green category. This indicates a manageable level of ongoing cost, with borrowing commitments unlikely to constrain frontline services or broader financial flexibility.

## 6.5. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA), established under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, is a ring-fenced account dedicated to the ownership and management of council housing. It records both income – primarily tenant rents, service charges, and subsidies – and expenditure, including housing management, day-to-day repairs, major stock improvements, and debt servicing for housing-related borrowing. As such, it is both a financial mechanism and a policy tool, shaping the way local authorities maintain existing stock, meet housing standards and sustainability targets, and invest in new homes.

For East Norfolk, the assumption is that Great Yarmouth Borough Council's HRA will be wholly subsumed into the new unitary authority, since no boundary changes are proposed for the borough. From vesting day, the HRA will therefore form an integral part of East Norfolk's housing and financial strategy.

Great Yarmouth's draft HRA accounts for 2024/25 report income of £29.72m against expenditure of £29.07m, alongside borrowing of £1.74m. The net deficit of £1.26m illustrates the fine margins within which the HRA operates, where even modest shifts in income or costs can tip the account into deficit. The authority currently owns and manages around 5,762 homes and provides landlord services to 377 leaseholders, making the scale significant within the East Norfolk housing market.

The council maintains a minimum reserve balance of £2m – broadly consistent with sector expectations – but this is tight relative to the size of the account. Forecasts for 2025/26 show a small surplus of £0.11m, but the medium-term plan requires savings of £1m in 2026/27 and £2.8m in 2027/28 simply to preserve reserves at that minimum threshold. This indicates limited headroom, with little margin for unexpected shocks. Borrowing is expected to increase further, both to accelerate affordable housing delivery and to fund energy efficiency and decarbonisation works. Rent setting has been carried out in line with government policy, but the ongoing legacy of national rent controls continues to constrain income growth.

The trajectory highlights both risks and opportunities. On one hand, the need for additional borrowing and recurring savings suggests long-term affordability pressures. On the other, the existence of a dedicated HRA provides East Norfolk with a structured mechanism to invest in new homes, regenerate existing stock, and align landlord services with wider social and environmental goals. The ending of Great Yarmouth's

joint venture with Norse Group has also given the council more direct control of its repairs and maintenance functions, creating scope for future efficiencies.

In short, Great Yarmouth's HRA brings both vulnerability and potential into the new East Norfolk authority. While its reserve base is thin and affordability challenges loom in the medium term, it embeds a significant stock of council housing within the unitary's remit and provides a platform for growth. With prudent management, a focus on decarbonisation and compliance (including preparation for Awaab's Law), and careful balancing of borrowing with affordability, the HRA can be leveraged as a core driver of East Norfolk's housing strategy and wider regeneration agenda.

## 6.6. Conclusion: financial resilience and long-term viability

East Norfolk begins from a more balanced position. Its baseline surplus of £3m reflecting a steadier cost profile and relatively contained social care pressures. While it does not benefit from the same deprivation-led grant upside as Greater Norwich, East Norfolk's income base is relatively stable. However, harmonisation does not consistently drive revenue growth: most scenarios actually result in income foregone compared to the baseline. The exception is *Weighted Average +5%*, which delivers the strongest and still legally compliant outcome. The key feature here is stability rather than volatility—East Norfolk's districts start from comparatively close positions, meaning household impacts are moderate, but the overall fiscal headroom from harmonisation is limited.

The transformation pathway strengthens that foundation. Though transition costs peak in the first three years, the programme reaches payback in Year 4 and then sustains an annual net benefit of around £18m. By Year 8, East Norfolk achieves a cumulative surplus of almost £90m, underpinned by permanent efficiencies in workforce, systems, and demand management. These are structural gains, not temporary savings, embedding resilience against future shocks.

On the balance sheet, the picture is mixed but manageable. Unearmarked reserves at ~4% of NRE fall into the red threshold, requiring early attention to rebuild resilience. Debt per capita sits in the amber range at ~£1,648 per resident, but the leverage is proportionate: the debt-to-non-current asset ratio of 40% is within the amber

threshold and debt-to-council tax revenue is firmly green at 1.92x, assuming harmonisation under the “Weighted Average + 5%” scenario. Debt servicing at ~3% of the revenue budget remains within green limits, leaving capacity for service spend.

Taken together, these factors point to a unitary that is financially sound. East Norfolk combines a modest baseline surplus, a stable revenue trajectory, and transformation savings that deliver a material and lasting uplift. While rebuilding reserves remains essential, borrowing levels are affordable, harmonisation choices are straightforward, and structural efficiencies are embedded early. With careful financial management, the proposed East Norfolk authority would not only be viable from vesting but also positioned to deliver long-term resilience and high-quality services across its communities.

## 7. Assessment against government criteria

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
<b>UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT &amp; OUR APPROACH</b>		
<b>A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.</b>	Under this proposal a single tier of local government is achieved in Norfolk as three new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, eight authority system – an East Norfolk, a West Norfolk and a Greater Norwich. In developing this case for a three-unitary Norfolk we have undertaken an options appraisal of the alternatives using the government's Local Government Reorganisation criteria to ensure we are proposing the best option for our region.	<i>Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 5 in this proposal</i>
<b>Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage of disadvantage for one part of the area.</b>	Our proposal for East Norfolk makes up a sensible economic area, as it is uniquely positioned at the frontline of the UK's climate transition and stands as a driver of inclusive, place-based economic growth, anchored in renewable energy, marine services, tourism, agriculture and healthcare. Its geography includes the Energy Coast at Great Yarmouth and Bacton Energy Hub, as well as a dynamic network of market towns and rural communities. East Norfolk can be a national exemplar of how rural and coastal areas lead in clean	<i>Section 3 in this proposal</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	growth and climate resilience without losing their identity.	
<b>Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.</b>	A new unitary council for East Norfolk will aim to increase housing supply as it will offer significant opportunities for development as well as be able to respond to its specific housing needs and affordability challenges. Linking housing development to economic development opportunities in the clean energy sector is key to the area's success. By gaining oversight of functions such as highways, transport and strategic infrastructure and linking housing needs (distribution and mix) to economic growth locations will put the new unitary in a strong position to respond to its specific housing requirements and support the region in its growth ambitions.	Sections 3, and 5.2.3 in this proposal. Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints. Section 5.2  Appendix D – Boundaries
<b>Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.</b>	The development of the proposed service delivery models has been informed by an engagement exercise including council members and officer representatives, key stakeholders, and key partners across Norfolk. We have also assessed the financial implications of reorganisation which estimated the costs, savings, and income	Section 5 in this proposal  Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	implications of the three-unitary model.	
<b>Proposals should clearly describe the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these areas expected to achieve the outcomes described.</b>	The proposal sets out how the new operating model for East Norfolk will bring services together to achieve better outcomes for its residents. It will do this by making decisions that are rooted in the very specific needs, demands and opportunities of the area, and redesigning services around the realities of its coastal areas, market towns and rural communities. Earlier interventions and outreach provide the foundation for a more joined-up, preventative and person-centred approach to public services, delivering better outcomes for its residents.	<i>Section 5 in this area proposal Appendix E - East Norfolk Blueprints.</i>
<b>UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRITERIA</b>		
<b>Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.</b>	<i>A new unitary for East Norfolk will be the right size and presents an opportunity to achieve efficiencies and withstand financial shocks as it will bring coherence to services across a diverse mix of coastal, rural and urban communities. With the largest population and tax base of the three proposed authorities, East Norfolk begins from a position of relative financial strength, but with some concentrated demand pressures. There is an opportunity to use the strong fiscal base to invest in a</i>	<i>Section 6 in this proposal  Appendix C - Financial Appraisal</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	predictive, early-intervention model to cut long-term costs and turn this early investment into sustained financial gains.	
<b>As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.</b>	The total population of East Norfolk is 336,524 but this will rise to 406,714 by 2035. <sup>11</sup>	<i>Section 3 in this proposal</i>
<b>There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.</b>	While the population of our East Norfolk unitary is below the 500,000 figure typically cited in government guidance, we strongly believe that our economic, demographic, and service delivery distinctiveness warrant a bespoke approach. The case for unitarisation should not be built on strict adherence to population size, but on functional need and strategic opportunity, <i>reflecting distinct challenges and opportunities</i> , and the potential to develop place-based delivery of local government services, which will align services with the real geography of people's lives.	<i>Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal</i>  <i>Appendix D - Boundaries</i>
<b>Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.</b>	Our proposal sets out how the three-unitary model delivers the optimal balance between scale and responsiveness. It achieves efficiencies through public service reform and redesign moving to a preventative model of service delivery which creates efficiencies	<i>Sections 5.2, 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal</i>

<sup>11</sup> Based on 2021 census data.



<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	through reducing cost and reducing demand, resulting in savings growing to £17m by year 3,	
<b>Proposals should set out how will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</b>	Reorganisation creates upfront transition and disaggregation costs (£32m in total – see the Public Sector Reform, Efficiency & Financial Sustainability section chapter in the main report), but these are outweighed by the scale of recurrent savings (growing to £17m in year 3). Our eight-year profile shows how the new unitary model reaches a payback point in year 4 and delivers a permanent reduction in Norfolk’s structural deficit.	<i>Sections 6.3 and 6.6 in this proposal.</i>  <i>Section 7 in the main proposal.</i>  <i>Appendix H – Implementation Plan</i>
<b><i>PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY</i></b>		
<b>Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.</b>	As a unitary, East Norfolk will be able to deliver high quality public services as it will be empowered to make decisions that are rooted in the unique needs and assets of the area, rather than being diluted within a much larger organisation. Services will be designed around the demands and opportunities of coastal and market towns, suburbs and rural communities, being responsive to individual local needs. Together, these changes provide the foundation for a more joined-up, preventative and person-centred approach to public service provision in parts of the county which have previously	<i>Section 5 in this proposal</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	<p>been overlooked and left behind.</p> <p>Our proposal for an East Norfolk unitary authority is ambitious and aspirational for the future of this area and will deliver better outcomes for our residents, local businesses and communities.</p>	
<p><b>Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.</b></p>	<p>In developing our service delivery models for each new unitary area, delivering services at a scale and proximity to better serve citizens have been the key objectives.</p> <p>However, we have also sought to avoid unnecessary fragmentation or disaggregation of key services where a joined-up approach is the optimum solution. For example, while it is proposed that each unitary would have their own sovereign adult social care meeting local needs and circumstances service to deliver local services they would collaborate on key issues such as Safeguarding Partnerships and Commissioning through partnership boards.</p>	<p><i>Section 5 in this proposal</i></p>
<p><b>Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.</b></p>	<p>The proposed East Norfolk unitary council offers the opportunity to deliver public service reform through the provision of locally provided, person-centred support. This will mean that decisions are made tailored to the unique needs, assets and pressures in East rather than being lost within</p>	<p><i>Section 5.2 in this proposal</i></p>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	a much larger and remote organisation. Education, social care, public health and housing will be integrated in order to undertake intervention and outreach activities and identify vulnerable residents before they present to the council, leading to better outcomes for individuals as well as better value for money.	
<b>Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.</b>	<p>The proposals for East Norfolk have considered the impact of a range of crucial public services and how the new unitaries can deliver better public services, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A community-based early intervention and prevention model</li> <li>- A single housing management infrastructure and consolidation of existing ALOs to unlock housing development</li> <li>- A localised approach for adult social, children's social care and SEND where each unitary has their own social care service to deliver to local services with collaboration on some key areas to avoid unnecessary disaggregation</li> </ul>	<p><i>Sections 5.2.1 - 5.2.6 in this proposal.</i></p> <p><i>Section 9 in the main proposal</i></p> <p><i>Appendix E – East Norfolk Blueprints</i></p> <p><i>Appendix H – Implementation Plan</i></p> <p><i>Appendix I – RAID Log</i></p>
<b>LOCAL ENGAGEMENT</b>		
<b>Proposals should show how councils in the area have</b>	Six councils across Norfolk have worked together and created an	<i>Section 6 in the main proposal</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
<b>sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.</b>	engagement platform 'Future Norfolk', that has built an informed understanding of the three-unitary model, with an ambition to strengthen democratic accountability, respect local identity and deliver sustainable, adaptable public services. From the outset, we moved from early awareness-raising and listening around the three pillars—People, Place, Progress - that lead us towards a confident, coordinated presentation of views, aligned within our proposal that met the Government's criteria.	
<b>It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.</b>	A number of methods and strategies were specifically designed to ensure meaningful and constructive engagement which are outlined in full in section 6 within the main proposal.	<i>Section 6 within the main proposal</i>
<b>Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.</b>	'Place' was one of the key pillars of the engagement strategy to ensure that the proposals actively and meaningfully considered issues of local identity. Respecting local identity and cultural and historic significance and shared heritage was a key message coming through the engagement programme and was seen as particularly important in terms of coastal management	<i>Sections 2, 3 and 4 in this proposal.</i>  <i>Section 6 in the main proposal</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	and adaptation and the provision of much resort / tourism infrastructure / public realm provided by the existing Great Yarmouth Borough Council and North Norfolk District Council as assets which supported a strong tourism economy.	
<b>Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.</b>	Section 5.4 provides evidence of the outcomes of the engagement programme, which included over 5,000 survey submissions, 17,800 website visitors, and a reach of nearly 500,000 on social media.	<i>Section 6 within the main proposal.</i>
<b>BOUNDARY CHANGE</b>		
<b>Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.</b>	We considered a three unitary option that would not involve changing existing council boundaries. In developing this option, it became apparent that it has some critical limitations. This has been discounted in preference of the alternative three unitary option - involving boundary changes for two of the seven current Norfolk districts. Whilst this would represent a one-off change of boundaries (and the associated extra work) we strongly believe it represents the right long-term LGR decision given the scale and diversity of Norfolk and how our residents live their lives in 2025, compared to 1974. We therefore	<i>Sections 2 and 3 in this proposal</i>  <i>Appendix A - Options Appraisal</i>  <i>Appendix D - Boundaries</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	believe it is worth investing in moving to a model that will be future proof and truly reflects the diverse communities of Norfolk.	
<b>DEVOLUTION SUPPORT</b>		
<b>New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements</b>	The three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside three in Suffolk, strengthens devolution by combining strategic regional leadership with strong local representation. It enables balanced decision-making, supports shared priorities like infrastructure, skills, and housing, and ensures diverse voices inform regional governance. This structure fosters inclusive growth and operational resilience while maintaining local accountability and effective collaboration across both counties.	<i>Section 8 within the main proposal</i>
<b>Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.</b>	The three-unitary model for Norfolk strengthens devolution by enabling balanced representation within a Strategic Authority shared with Suffolk. It supports strategic regional planning while preserving local delivery and democratic accountability. With six unitaries across both counties, the model enhances collaboration, aligns with shared economic and infrastructure priorities, and ensures diverse voices inform regional decisions. This structure fosters inclusive growth,	<i>Section 8 within the main proposal</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	operational resilience, and a coherent approach to investment, skills, housing, and transport—unlocking the full potential of Norfolk and Suffolk through coordinated governance.	
<b>Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.</b>	The proposed three-unitary model for Norfolk, alongside three in Suffolk, creates a Strategic Authority with six distinctive but balanced constituent councils. This structure ensures proportional representation across diverse urban, rural, and coastal populations, avoiding dominance by any single area. It reduces the current 16 councils to six, striking a balance between scale and democratic accountability. The model builds on existing collaboration and preparatory work, aligning with devolution timelines and priorities to ensure a smooth transition and effective governance from the outset.	<i>Section 8 within the main proposal</i>
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>		
<b>New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</b>	East Norfolk’s democratic model is designed to ensure that local communities have a structured and meaningful voice in shaping decisions. The preferred approach centres on the establishment of Area Committees, led by elected members, which will feed into the Cabinet on an advisory basis. This	<i>Section 4 within this proposal</i>

<i>LGR government criteria</i>	<i>How the East Norfolk proposal meets it</i>	<i>Relevant section of the proposal</i>
	structure provides a clear mechanism for local input while maintaining strategic oversight at the unitary level. Informal forums and partnerships will feed into formal governance, enabling proportionate place-based governance that reflects the distinct needs of East Norfolk's towns, villages, and coastal communities.	
<b>Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.</b>	East Norfolk is committed to embedding community voice within its governance structures. The Area Committee model will be supported by a broader engagement strategy, including informal networks, participatory tools, and co-designed session and existing parish councils.	<i>Section 4 within this proposal</i>
<b>Where there already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.</b>	In parished areas, existing town and parish councils will retain their independence and functions. Informal forums and partnerships will provide a complementary platform for collaboration, without duplicating responsibilities. In unparished areas, these informal forums will serve as the primary vehicle for neighbourhood-level engagement.	<i>Section 4 within this proposal</i>

*Table 13: Assessment against government criteria summary*