

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

18 February 2025

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BROWN - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

For the period December 2025 to February 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Development Management & Planning Processing Unit

Timescales for determining planning applications continue to remain strong with a marked improvement in planning application validation times.

A new Section 106 officer commenced work on 5 January 2026 and is updating the Exacom (software) system and documenting procedures. The suite of internal audit recommendations are being addressed with a number already delivered, aiming to complete by August 2026.

Adoption of the new Local Plan and the interpretation and implementation of new policies against live planning applications is the primary focus of the DM team at present. There are many notable new policies in the Local Plan which introduce a step-change compared with the former Core Strategy with a period of adjustment. Many long-standing applications submitted prior to adoption require updates from applicants and agents and this adds to determination timeframes with officers seeking to minimise impacts.

Business at the DM Committee is expected to build over the coming months with a number of Major applications reaching critical milestones.

The Development Manager is currently reviewing the resource demand for the team given the expected increase in volume of major and non-major applications directly as a result of adoption of the Local Plan. An hybrid application for the largest allocation in the new Local Plan at North Walsham is expected to be submitted in late February 2026 and there are a number of applications which are close to submission needing to be adequately resourced to be able to deliver effective and timely planning outcomes. This builds on the positive work delivered through the Planning Service Improvement Plan.

Member Training delivered on 29th January 2026 outlined a number changes introduced by the Planning & Infrastructure Bill with a number of Regulations expected to be introduced which will have a profound impact on how the Council's Planning functions are delivered, including the make-up of Development Committee and in relation to which applications are delegated to

officers and which can be referred to Development Committee. The Council's Constitution is being reviewed in relation to Development Committee in conjunction with the Council's Monitoring Officer. Further training for Members on this subject is expected to be delivered post agreement of constitutional amendments.

The Planning Performance Unit have recruited temporary help to backfill a post that is working on the completion of the Open Digital Plan project objectives. One aspect of which is to enable the creation of a dashboard to enable officers and Members to view Development Management performance data easily.

Planning Policy

Full Council adopted the new North Norfolk Local Plan on 17th December 2025 which is now being used in the determination of planning applications. The Core Strategy and previous Site-Specific Allocations documents have been revoked. The six-week period for legal challenge following adoption of the Local Plan closed on 28th January 2026. The Council has not been notified of any such challenge. The team continue to assist Development Management colleagues with the Plans implementation and are currently working on a number of further explanatory guides and providing interpretation support. A further Local Plan training session for Members was well attended on 29th January 2026. This covered both the new Local Plan policies and an overview of recent legislative changes and proposed changes released in December through the Planning & Infrastructure Act and National Planning Policy Framework.

Work continues to deliver the Council's first statutory Biodiversity Duty report as set out under the Environment Act which will detail the actions the Council have undertaken to benefit biodiversity, inclusive of Biodiversity Net Gain as a result of planning policy requirements. Officers are also advancing the Council's Annual Monitoring Report as well as other MHCLG data submissions around housing delivery and reviewing the raft of recent government guidance documents and announcements around future Plan making in association with the LURA, Planning & Infrastructure Act and the proposed revision of the NPPF along with their implications for the Council.

Building Control

The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) has officially moved to a standalone organisation, paving the way for the creation of a single construction regulator - a key recommendation of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The move from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) to an arm's-length body under the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) represents a significant moment for the built environment.

The Building Control Fees and Charges Regulations consultation has now closed, with an expectation of an outcome in mid-2026. This is likely to provide greater charging capabilities for the current 'non-fee earning' work, which will reduce the pressure on the Local Authority finances.

The Building Safety Levy is moving closer to implementation on 1 October 2026 and the new burden funding has now been confirmed which will allow the operation of the levy to be cost neutral to the Local Authority.

Conservation Design and Landscape

NNDC adopted the Neatishead Conservation Area Appraisal at Cabinet on 2 February 2026. This guidance document was prepared by the Broads Authority with input from the Council's CD&L team and can now be used for all planning functions within the jurisdiction of both authorities. This means we now have 27 such appraisals adopted across our district (out of a total of 84 such designations).

Enforcement

The Enforcement team completed 2025 on a high note, achieving significant progress in case management and closures. By year-end, the team successfully reduced the number of open cases to 294, having opened a total of 366 cases and closed 325 throughout the year. Furthermore, the issuance of 23 Enforcement Notices and 10 Planning Contravention Notices underscores the dedication to enforcing regulations where appropriate.

The key performance indicator, which aims for a decision-making timeframe of 30 days on enforcement cases, has been effectively met, with an average decision time of 28 days reflecting our efficient approach to site visits and assessments.

It has been a busy start to 2026 with the team already opening 33 new cases, with 24 closures recorded. Additionally, we plan to serve 11 Enforcement Notices by the end of February 2026, addressing a variety of breaches, including but limited to: unauthorised use of a dwelling as a large holiday let, an extraction unit and wood windows to uPVC in a conservation area.

Following a successful prosecution for non-compliance with an Enforcement Notice at 19 Station Road, Great Ryburgh, direct action has commenced. However, site difficulties have led to a temporary halt. The team is actively pursuing an injunction against the owner to facilitate the resumption of works by mid-February 2026.

The team will also be reviewing the condition monitoring process and the enforcement policy in February 2026 to ensure they are fit for purpose, but only minor changes are expected.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Development Committee: 19th February 2026.

3 Meetings attended
5 and 19 Cabinet & Business Planning 19 Norfolk Strategic Planning Forum 23 Health & Wellbeing Seminar Copeman Centre Briston 26 Planning Portfolio Holder Meeting 27 Public Meeting for Corpusty School 28 Overview & Scrutiny Committee 28 Synergy Trust meeting 29 Planning Training seminar 29 Brinton/Sharrington PC 30 Corpusty School Public Meeting