

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

25 March 2026

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BROWN - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

For the period February to March 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Planning Development Management

The first **Development Committee**, since adoption of the Council's new Local Plan, took place on 19 February 2026. This included approval of an allocated housing site at Holt (PF/24/2530), a scheme for a replacement dwelling in Cley (approved), a matter concerning replacement windows in a listed building in Holt (both refused), a dog walking field in Thursford (approved) and a house extension in Walcott (refused). All decisions were made in accordance with the officer recommendations save for the scheme at Thursford which was conditionally approved notwithstanding objections raised by the highway authority.

The Council's **Constitution** was updated in March 2026 following agreement by the Council's Monitoring Officer in relation to suggested amendments proposed by the Development Manager and Assistant Director for Planning. The key amendments relate to "Determination of Planning and Listed Building Applications" in Chapter 6 of the Constitution (page 94 onwards). The purpose of the change is to ensure clarity as to which cases need to come before Development Committee and which can be delegated to Officers. Additional notes have been added to aid clarity. As a general guide, if members wish to call applications to Committee for determination then they can do so at any point up to 7 days after the end of the public consultation period (provided planning reasons are supplied). After this point, Officers will only contact Local Ward Cllrs if Officers wish to make a decision which is contrary to the most recent written view of the Town/Parish Council. Further training on the Constitution and Planning is being arranged (likely as a short Teams event) which will be open for all members to attend.

In terms of **Planning Performance** (Speed and Quality), this is still being maintained well above national targets with 24 month performance to the end of 2025 standing at 97% within time for Majors and 95% within time for non-major applications. The Council's appeals record remains exceptional. Nonetheless, positive steps are being taken in terms of workload management to ensure excellent performance can continue to be maintained with increased workloads.

Planning Policy

It's been a busy start to 2026 with the team providing **support for Development Management colleagues** and developers in the interpretation and application of the new Local Plan policies. Work continues on a number of explanatory guidance documents which will set out compliance requirements and assist in the step change required to implement the Local Plan policies.

Cabinet reports were approved on 9 March, delivering the Council's first ever Biodiversity Duty Report and advising of the Governments expectations, timelines and legislative changes around commencing the Local Plan review.

The team have provided support and input into emerging **Neighbourhood Plans** (NPs), policies for both Trunch and Tunstead and are currently formally reviewing Tunstead's emerging NP which has now reached Regulation 14 stage and is out for public consultation.

The **Annual Monitoring Report** is being advanced with the incorporation of additional retail monitoring.

The **Brownfield Register**, which provides information on previously developed sites considered suitable for residential development, has been updated in line with the Governments latest Data Standard so that it provides a historic record of all sites featured on the Register, including where they are no longer suitable for inclusion (e.g. when they commence construction). Alongside this, the Brownfield Land Register webpage and Web Map have been updated to reflect the changes.

Custom and self-build Housing, the team has conducted a full review of the Council's legislative requirements and processes and set out improvement of monitoring processes in order to clarify the precise level of demand for custom or self-build housing in North Norfolk, and how the Council is meeting its duty to grant sufficient permissions to meet the demand. The review, including emerging new guidance, will ensure a more robust position is in place to ensure a consistent approach is followed in order to support officers and Members in determining such applications in the future.

Building Control

Building Control fee scheme and Building Safety Level documents completed. Final internal audit recommendations completed. The team are performing well with all performance measures being delivered above target.

Enforcement

The Enforcement Team have had busy start to the year opening 81 cases so far this calendar year. With an average of 90 cases opened per quarter, it is anticipated that we will surpass this number by the end of March, indicating an upward trend in incoming cases. So far this year, the team has successfully closed 51 cases, and we currently have 226 open cases. Our goal is to reduce this number to approximately 200 cases by Easter, reflecting our commitment to managing our workload effectively.

In the first three months of the year, the team has issued three Enforcement Notices, addressing issues such as an unauthorised fence, the installation of uPVC windows in a conservation area, and an unauthorized extractor unit. Additionally, there are eight further Enforcement Notices scheduled to be served in the upcoming weeks.

The review of the condition monitoring process will be undertaken at the end of March, with ongoing proactive monitoring remaining a priority.

2025 Statistics

Total Opened cases 366

Total Closed cases 325

Enforcement Notices served 19
Breach of Condition Notices 1
Section 215 Notice 1
Listed Building Notices 2
Planning Contravention Notices served 10

2026 Statistics

Total Opened cases 81
Total Closed cases 51
Current Open cases 224
Number of Enforcement Notices served 3
Number of Planning Contravention Notices served 3

Conservation Design and Landscaping

At its meeting on 9 March, Cabinet endorsed the publication of the Council's first Biodiversity Duty Report. This is a recently introduced statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021 and will become a regular requirement moving forward.

The report sets out and evidences the Council's approach to conserving and enhancing biodiversity and details its strategies, policies, objectives and actions for delivering biodiversity enhancements during the next three-year period (1st January 2026 - 31st December 2028).

Planning Support

The new Section 106 officer is progressing well, familiarising herself with the software and developing processes, including 'best practice'. In addition, several of the audit recommendations have been actioned with a plan for completion of the recommendations in the next few months. An additional part-time resource has been secured which aims to support the Section 106 officer with administration tasks moving forward and give greater resilience (an audit requirement). The team are currently working with other officers across the Council to put in place improved practices for sharing information regarding developments.

The Open Digital Planning (ODP) project will soon successfully complete, with the Council fulfilling the requirement to make data sets available for national use. These include: Listed Buildings, Article 4s, Conservation Areas and TPOs. This MHCLG funded project has also covered additional digital training for both Planning and IT staff, software to enable automated updating of data and software to enable Planning to better manage its documentation and GDPR compliance. This fund (£50k) has also enabled the backfilling of a post to focus delivery on improving access to planning data through PowerBi dashboards. This has already allowed customer services and improved access to information to better inform customers, is an excellent management tool and should reduce the need for as many licences in the future.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Development Committee 19 March 2026

3 Meetings attended
February 19 Development Committee 19 Planning Portfolio meeting 23 Pre Cabinet and Business Planning March 2 Anglian Water Workshop meeting 3 Licensing Training session 3 Melton Constable PC 9 Cabinet and Business Planning 16 Edgefield Pc 17 Stody PC 18 Thornage PC 19 Development Committee and Planning Portfolio meetings 25 Full Council