

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 July 2026

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BROWN - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

For the period June to July 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Development Management

The Development Committee met on 18 June and considered three planning applications and confirmed a Tree Preservation Order. Items included a previously deferred item at Fakenham for a farm shop and associated development, the creation of a new footway with interpretation panels in Poppyland and the erection of a detached garden outbuilding in Blakeney. The Committee will meet again on 18 July and will hear three applications relating to banking facilities at Fakenham. It is expected that major retail planning applications in Holt and a significant Local Plan housing allocation for Norwich Road in Cromer will be heard respectively in August and September.

As noted in the previous update, new regulations including a National Scheme of Delegation will come into effect on 31 October 2026. The regulations will fundamentally change the application types that will come before the Development Committee for determination and likely result in a reduction in the number of items being determined by Development Committee. Officers are working with the Constitution Working Party on the required changes to the Council's Constitution that will enable the National Scheme of Delegation to be implemented. The revised constitution is expected to be heard by Full Council in September 2026.

Recruitment is nearing completion for four new posts in the Development Management Team to meet the increased demand. At the time of writing, offers have been made for all posts i.e. 2 x Senior Planning Officers, 1 x Planning Officer / Trainee Planning Officer and 1 x Household Planning Assistant. Interviews were positive and the expectation is that we will be filling these new posts shortly. The recruitment drive has been successful, with a fresh approach and new ideas attracting planning officers to NNDC. This much needed capacity will help our service deliver at a time of a surge in planning application numbers and complexity with the service aiming to maintain its excellent performance. We look forward to welcoming the new officers into their roles at the Council.

Planning Policy

The team continues to put in place the building blocks for undertaking the **Local Plan Review** and meeting early requirements under the Governments

new plan-making system.

Recruitment is underway for 1 x Planning Policy Manager, 1 x Senior Planning Policy Officer and 1 x Planning Policy Officer to fill vacant positions and to meet the challenges of a 30-month delivery of a new Local Plan, with interviews taking place in July.

On 6th July, Cabinet agreed to dissolve the **Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party** and to the creation of a new **Local Plan & Conservation Task Group**. The purpose of the Task Group is to provide governance, oversight, and direction for the Local Plan Review and to make decisions at defined stages of plan preparation within its authority delegated by Cabinet. It will also oversee and endorse the preparation and adoption of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and other relevant policy-related issues pertaining to the built and natural environments and relating to the Conservation, Design and Landscape Service.

On 30 June 2026, the Council gave the required **notice of intention to commence a new local plan** under the new plan-making system. Alongside this, the Council was also required to **publish a timetable** for preparing the new Local Plan. The timetable provides an initial estimation of the dates for meeting the key stages of plan preparation under the new plan making system and within 30-month plan preparation timetable.

The formal 30-month plan making timeline is expected to start by or before 31 October when the Council passes through the first Gateway test, which is a self-assessment of readiness to begin plan making.

In order to provide meaningful early engagement in the plan-making process, a statutory **Scoping Consultation** is taking place between 20 July to 31 August to invite representations on what matters the new Local Plan should address and how future engagement on the plan should be carried out. This consultation stage provides the local community and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to have their say at the very start of the plan-making process.

A '**Call for Sites**' is being carried out as part of early work to prepare the new Local Plan and to inform future decisions about which areas may be appropriate for development in the Local Plan. It provides an opportunity for landowners, developers, agents and members of the public to suggest land that could be considered for a range of uses, including housing, employment, infrastructure, open space, community and other uses.

A first round was held between Monday 1 June 2026 and Monday 13 July 2026. A second round commenced on 20 July 2026 in tandem with the Local Plan Scoping Consultation.

The Council will assess all submitted sites to understand their suitability, availability and development potential.

The team have recently commissioned a **North Norfolk Design Guide**

Update, intended to support the new Local Plan as a 'Supplementary Plan'. This will include a review of the existing Design Guide to identify which elements need updating and where and how new guidance can be introduced.

A **Landscape Capacity Review** has also been commissioned to provide a robust review of the capacity to accommodate growth within the Norfolk Coast National Landscape, including Heritage Coast and Undeveloped Coast designations, and to review the locally designated 'Undeveloped Coast' extent and boundaries to ensure the designation remains appropriate.

Further evidence expected to be prepared as part of the Local Plan Review is detailed on page 39 of the Scoping Consultation document.

The proposed **Tunstead & Sco Ruston Neighbourhood Plan** has been submitted for independent examination. The examination will enable the Plan to be tested to ensure it conforms to the required 'Basic Conditions', and the appointed examiner will make recommendations to us on the Plan's suitability to move forward to a future public referendum. Before the examination begins, there will be an opportunity for public to comment. A six-week consultation period is anticipated to commence in early September.

Planning Enforcement

1. Case Volume and Workload Analysis

During the current calendar year, the Planning Enforcement team has opened 236 new cases. While the team's historical annual average is 360 cases, the current rate of incoming reports indicates a projected total of 450 cases by the end of the calendar year.

This sustained increase in demand has significantly impacted individual officer workloads. The team currently manages 281 active cases, which sits noticeably above our target. After reviewing individual caseloads, it appears that approximately 20% of these cases are eligible for closure. To address this a dedicated 'case-closure day' has been scheduled, allowing the team to focus exclusively on concluding these matters.

2. Age Profile of Active Cases

The vast majority of outstanding work remains current, with active cases heavily concentrated in the last two calendar years. Legacy issues have been largely resolved, leaving only a small number of historic files.

The breakdown of the 281 active cases by year of origin is detailed below:

2014:1
2016:1
2019: 1
2020: 4

2021: 3
2022: 4
2023: 14
2024: 32
2025: 76
2026: 145
Total cases: 281

The primary objective moving forward is to progress the 2025 and 2026 cases to a formal conclusion.

3. Enforcement Notices and Monitoring

A total of 10 formal enforcement notices have been served during this calendar year. Of these, four notices were issued in June, targeting the following breaches:

11-13 Norwich Street, Fakenham: Unauthorised installation of uPVC windows within a designated Conservation Area.

11-13 Norwich Street, Fakenham: Unauthorised installation of a roller shutter door within a designated Conservation Area.

Coastal MOT centre, Sheringham: Service of a Section 215 (Untidy Land) Notice on the MOT Centre, addressing an adverse visual impact at a prominent gateway to the town centre.

Sutton Hall, Sutton: Unauthorised use of property for holiday let activity.

Alongside formal enforcement action, proactive compliance monitoring remains ongoing across the district. A particular focus is currently directed toward the large-scale development on Overstrand Road, Cromer.

Conservation, Design and Landscape

- Following the departure of one of the Council's part-time Senior Landscape Officers (Ecology), his upgraded full-time post was recently advertised and interviews held. Unfortunately, however, it has not been possible to make an appointment due to the candidates not possessing the required skillset for a senior position. We are therefore going out to advert again in the hopes of attracting new interest in the post. In the meantime, the section remains under significant pressure to deliver on its ecological obligations.
- In response to an information request from natural England, CD&L recently completed a response table outlining the current and proposed conservation measures within the River Wensum and Broads SAC. This response will feed into the Environmental Delivery Plan for the area which will form the basis for delivering the Nature Restoration Fund. This will offer developers a more streamlined way of mitigating nutrient loads from their developments. In essence, developers are charged a levy which is then pooled to deliver nature restoration at a more strategic scale, thus

saving them from commissioning their own site-specific mitigations.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

July
16 Development Committee
22 Full Council

3 Meetings attended

Dates for past meetings:

June
18 Full Council
19 Development Committee
22 Pre Cabinet and Business Progress
30 Constitution Working Party

July
1 Norfolk Environmental Credits