OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 15 July 2026 in the Council Chamber - Council Offices at 9.30 am

Committee Members Present:	Cllr V Holliday (Chairman)	Cllr M Gray (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr S Penfold	Cllr P Bailey
	Cllr C Cushing	Cllr A Fletcher
	Cllr P Heinrich	Cllr C Rouse
	Cllr K Bayes	

Members also attending:	Cllr J Boyle, Cllr L Shires, Cllr L Withington,
Officers in Attendance:	Director For Resources, Assistant Director for Resources, Assistant Director People Services, Deputy Monitoring Officer, Revenues Manager, Democratic Services and Governance Manager and Democratic Services and Governance Officer.

1 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr K. Leith, Cllr P. Bailey and Cllr M. Hankins.

2 SUBSTITUTES

None

3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS

None

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th June 2026 were proposed by Cllr Heinrich and seconded by Cllr Fletcher to be approved as a correct record.

5 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

7 PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None

8 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY A

MEMBER

None

9 RESPONSES OF THE COUNCIL OR THE CABINET TO THE COMMITTEE'S REPORTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

None

10 2025/26 OUTTURN REPORT

Cllr L Shires presented the report, noting that the anticipated surplus for the year 2025/26 had been achieved as anticipated. She brought the Committees attention to the change to recommendation c) which came about as a result of discussions at Cabinet, namely for the surplus identified to be transferred to a New Burdens Reserve.

The Chair and Cllr Cushing thanked Cllr Shires and Officers for a helpful and well laid out report.

Following a question from Cllr Cushing, Cllr Shires confirmed she would provide the Committee with details of which s106 developments funded the £188k Fakenham play area renovations. Cllr Cushing also asked for further information regarding Employer pension contributions. The DFR confirmed that payments were identified within each cost centre and he would provide the Committee with total cash contributions.

Cllr Penfold asked whether the new burden reserve would be sufficient to cover anticipated matters. Cllr Shires indicated that the government was asking for more to be delivered with less funding and the reserve was intended to cover these matters. Cllr Penfold also queried why NNDC were picking up the cost relating to Cromer Church wall, The DFR indicated he believed this to be historic following the widening of the High Street which resulted in a transfer of responsibilities.

Cllr Fletcher asked for clarification the sums identified for defects (£155k) relating to the Reef. Cllr Shires confirmed that this was to cover expected new build snagging and maintenance.

Cllr Bayes asked for more information regarding the shortfall in capital receipts detailed on page 30. Cllr Shires stated that where NNDC had excess land or assets they were disposed of, such as the Cedars in North Walsham, although market conditions were a factor. Cllr Bayes requested clarification on the spending relating to the 3G Pitch in North Walsham, Cllr Shires confirmed the spending related to Fakenham but reiterated that if the pitch could be facilitated in North Walsham, NNDC had agreed to support it.

Following a question from Cllr Bayes, Cllr Shires explained that rolled over unspent capital in connection with the Rocket House, related to temperature control of the building which was critical to control moisture in the building to prevent further issues.

The Chair asked whether, given the surplus there was less likely to be a need to increase Council Tax. Cllr Shires stated that given that NNDC manage its finances well she would hope that was the case but noted that this reflected what was known now and there was uncertainty over the government's position and funding. There would also be the need to consider the impact of LGR and the need to equalise banding across neighbouring authorities.

The Chair noted there was £1.8m capital rolled forward. Cllr Shires confirmed that this related to the intended purchase of 9 more properties for families in housing need. Cllr Boyle explained to the Committee that work was ongoing to search for suitable properties and confirmed that the funds would be spent this year.

Cllr Cushing asked for clarification as to why the capital funding programme for FLASH was not forecast according to project plan. Cllr Shires confirmed that it was a single project and therefore the total cost and remining amount was identified and believed this was a transparent approach.

The Chair asked for clarification relating to the borrowing identified, believing it to be as expected, and details of the Electric Vehicle (EV) spend noted. Cllr Shires explained that whilst it would prefer no borrowing, at times it was needed, although this was usually borrowing from the government. The DFR confirmed the EV in question was a replacement for a vehicle which had reached the end of its lease.

Cllr Penfold proposed and Cllr Fletcher seconded that the following be recommended to Full Council:

a) The provisional outturn position for the General Fund revenue account for 2025/26 (as shown in Appendix A);
b) The transfers to and from reserves as detailed within the report (and Appendix C);
c) The surplus of £0.354m to be transferred to the New Burdens Reserve
d) To note the balance on the General Reserve of £4.266m.
e) The financing of the 2025/26 capital programme as detailed within the report and at Appendix D.
f) The updated capital programme for 2026/27 to 2031/32 and scheme financing as outlined within the report and detailed at Appendix E;
g) Approval of additional funding to cover capital project overspends of £0.012m as detailed in paragraph 5.7.
h) Approval of capital project budget roll-forwards from 2025/26 into 2026/27 paragraph 5.10.
i) To note the addition of £26,834 towards Property Services Electric Vehicles, to be funded by the Asset Management Reserve over a four-year lease period. This budget has been approved by the Deputy S151 Officer under constitutional powers.
j) To approve the addition of £188,539 to renovate Fakenham Play Area to be funded from Capital S106 Contributions in 2026/27.
k) To approve the addition of £100k to the Community Housing Fund (Grants to Housing Providers) project, to be funded by Capital Receipts following a repaid grant in 2025/26.
l) To approve the updated Cromer Coast Protection Scheme budget to reflect that the approved RFCC (Environment Agency) grant has been awarded to the Mundesley Coastal Defences project only. This leaves the 2025/26 budget as £1,037,656. This is a movement of budget from the Cromer scheme to the Mundesley Scheme to meet grant conditions.
m) To approve the updated Mundesley Coastal Management Scheme budget to reflect that the approved RFCC (Environment Agency) grant has been award to the Mundesley Coastal Management Scheme project only. This leaves the 2025/26 budget as £998,217. This is a movement of budget from the Cromer

scheme to the Mundesley Scheme to meet grant conditions.

11 DEBT RECOVERY 2025-26

Cllr Shires presented the report, noting the excellent performance of the team, being within the top 3-4% of collection teams in the Country and at the top collection rate in Norfolk and the East of England. Cllr Shires noted the work the team does with the financial inclusion team to ensure a “wrap around” service for residents.

The Chair noted the increase in arrears and asked for reasons. The RM explained that the cost-of-living crisis was the main driver. In respect of Business Rates, the energy situation and the price of oil was part of the challenges faced. The RM stressed that in NNDC the team listened and engaged to assist. The Chair asked about how often the dedicated CAB support was available and whether it was sufficient? Cllr Shires suggested that local members could assist by making people aware of the financial inclusion team.

The Chair also asked for explanation of the difference in direct debit rates for Council Tax and Business Rates. The RM confirmed this was an ongoing difference with larger businesses often preferring to pay by BACS.

Cllr Bayes thanked officers for a good report and asked whether information was available to show whether specific areas had greater arears than others and whether the same people were chased year on year. The RM stated that the team had not specifically identified by geographic area but would review this and consider this further and whilst there were repeat issues, the team did its utmost to help, encouraging engagement.

Cllr Rouse enquired about payment plans agreed, Cllr Shires expressed that dialogue was critical and consideration was given to other outgoings and real affordability and arrears payment set accordingly.

Cllr Bayes proposed and Cllr Gray seconded and It Was **Unanimously Resolved** that the Full Council:

1. approves the annual report which details the Council’s write-offs, in accordance with the Council’s Debt Write-Off Policy and performance in relation to revenues collection.

2. approves the continued delegated authority as shown in appendix 2 for write offs.

12 HOUSING BENEFIT DEBT RECOVERY REPORT 1/4/25 - 31/3/26

The ADPS presented the report, bringing to the attention of the Committee the outstanding debt of £880k and a recovery rate of 31%, noting that this amounted to a strong performance (as considered by DWP). She explained that Housing Benefit is a difficult debt to collect and unlike Council Tax was not considered a “priority debt”.

Cllr Cushing asked for information as to the primary reason why debts occurred. The ADPS detailed that there were 2 main reason, claimant error and Local Authority error, most cases resulting from Claimant error, for example a delay in notifying a change of circumstances.

The Chair asked for information regarding benchmarking the of processing of new claims. The ADPS explained that the team dealt with approximately 2,000 changes each month which were handled as a priority and continued to look at ways to automate to release resources.

Cllr Penfold asked about the recovery rate and the connection with the migration to universal credit. ADPS noted that the team were utilising different enforcement methods if enforcement agents were not successful. The team were trialling the use of a company called "Payment Plan" who used electronic methods to encourage payment and payment plans. This was initially a free trial, and the team would be analysing success and consider the ongoing costs.

Cllr Fletcher believed that Norwich City Council performed well in this area, the ADPS commented that the fact that they had their own housing stock would distort the comparison.

The Chair commented on the strategies for prevention of debt and the Committee discussed the option to add a paragraph to reflect the preventative approach taken.

The Chair proposed and Cllr Rouse seconded that it be recommended that a new paragraph be added to the strategic approach to identify the preventative approach taken.

It was **unanimously resolved** to accept this recommendation.

Cllr Gray proposed and Cllr Rouse seconded and that it was **RESOLVED unanimously to recommend that Full Council:**

i Note the performance of the debt management function carried out by the Benefits service.

ii Note the debt write-offs for the year.

iii Note the ongoing impact of the completed Universal Credit migration programme on Housing Benefit debt recovery and collection methods.

iv To support the implementation of future recovery strategies, with a new paragraph being added to the strategic approach to identify the preventative approach taken.

v To approve the annual report giving details of Housing Benefit Overpayment debt recovery in accordance with the Council's Debt Recovery Policy, Write-Off Policy, and Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy.

13 DELEGATED DECISIONS JANUARY 2026 ONWARDS

DSGM presented the report.

The Committee received and noted the report.

The Committee adjourned at 10.50am.

Cllr Rouse left the meeting.

The Committee reconvened at 11 am.

14 DEPRIVATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The DSGO introduced the agenda item, reminding members that following an item on the April agenda, the Committee had asked for a further agenda item to allow them to consider themes and to consider where the Committee might add further value. Included within the pack was further information received from Officers on health-related barriers.

The Chair noted that she had expected that the Committee would have raw data they could consider, the ADPS confirmed that the data is broad, but she would be happy to provide the relevant data if the Committee gave guidance on which areas it wished to see.

The ADPS presented the additional information on health-related barriers, noting it combined deprivation data, health inequality information and Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) data to identify areas where disadvantage is concentrated and where preventative interventions may have the greatest impact.

Members were advised that health-related barriers are closely linked to broader social and economic issues, including income, employment, housing, transport, access to services and disability. The ADPS recognised that whilst North Norfolk was not among the most deprived districts nationally overall, the data identified specific market towns, coastal communities and rural areas where multiple forms of deprivation overlap, this included the wards of North Walsham East, Stalham, Lancaster South and Suffield Park, which feature across a number of deprivation indices, including income, employment and health .Additional areas identified included Cromer , North Walsham West, Holt, Wells with Holkham and Mundesley wards, with other areas of deprivation across the district.

The ADPS referenced the North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership and the development of a North Norfolk anti-poverty strategy. The Chair invited general comments from members. Cllr Penfold asked for information on the extent to which education was a factor. The ADPS referred to the specific group of NEET's (Not in Education, Employment or Training), which was receiving targeted support, Cllr Penfold identified that he was interested in education attainment in relation to up to 16 years and the ADPS agreed to speak to NCC to establish what data was available.

Cllr Gray believed that the Committee might need to step back and agree what areas it wished to consider before concentrating on Health. The Chair noted that within the report, the barriers to housing and services struck her and considered this was an area where NNDC had levers.

Cllr Bayes agreed that education was very important particularly the significance of the increase in NEETs. He was concerned about the lack of aspiration and available jobs and would appreciate more information about employment and education.

Cllr Heinrich, agreed with earlier comments regarding education but also believed employment was an issue across all wards and there are not enough permanent office based/factory jobs. He also noted the cost of transport particularly for access to further education.

Cllr Gray suggested the Committee consider the current report at this meeting. Cllr Shires offered to share the work she had done, noting that it could provide very granular data at street level. The Chair invited Cllr Withington to provide the Committee with information on the North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

Cllr Withington explained to members that the partnerships were place-based and coordinated action to address health inequalities through partnership working, the partnership considers wider causes of health inequalities, including employment, housing, transport and digital inclusion and that its priorities within the North Norfolk Partnership included musculoskeletal health, digital inclusion, mental health, health literacy and healthy living.

She identified that public health funding (£200,000 over 2 years) was used to support the coordination of the Partnership, commissioned projects and community projects targeted at reducing inequalities and improving wellbeing outcomes.

The Chair thanked Cllr Withington for the useful update. The Chair asked the Committee for views on where the Committee could add value.

Cllr Cushing considered the topic serious and believed that the issue of housing was within the remit of NNDC and therefore the Committee could add value. In terms of the recommendations proposed he was unsure what NNDC are being asked for and brought this into the context of the LGR proposal and the longevity of the organisation.

Cllr Gray stated that he was not against creation of anti-poverty strategy but suggested the Committee consider more broadly the areas it wished to cover. The Chair suggested that the Health & Wellbeing Partnership had actions within the wider health remit covered and Cllr Heinrich agreed that the Committee should support the Partnership.

The Chair asked whether the Committee could offer pre-scrutiny on the anti-poverty strategy. The ADPS confirmed it would be a new strategy, pulling together all the work currently being undertaken and looking forward post LGR. Cllr Cushing asked whether the resourcing for such a strategy had been approved as available, noting that such a strategy would be complicated to put together. Cllr Penfold believed it was an important piece of work. The Chair and Cllr Gray suggested that the Committee endorse the principle, with Cllr Gray proposing and Cllr Heinrich seconding 10.2 (page 138) of the report.

The Chair suggested that the Committee noted the report from the North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership (10.1 page 138)

The Committee discussed and agreed that 10.3 (page 138) could be removed as was covered by the Partnership but asked for a quarterly update to the Committee.

The Committee discussed 10.4 and 10.5 (page 138) and believed that there were not within the remit of the Committee or were otherwise continuing in any event.

The Chair suggested an additional resolution relating to access to housing, Cllr Gray considered it appropriate that the Committee set aside time to consider the wider themes.

Following a suggestion from Cllr Gray which was supported by Cllr Heinrich, the Committee agreed to invite Cllr Shires to help the Committee to explore the data and that this would be outside the formal meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Gray proposed and Cllr Heinrich seconded and it was **Resolved Unanimously** that

1. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the report from the North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership and invited the Partnership to provide the Committee with an update every quarter; and
2. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee endorse the development of a North Norfolk Anti-Poverty Strategy to provide a co-ordinated framework for addressing the wider determinants of health, including income, employment, housing, financial resilience and access to services.

15 MOBILE CONNECTIVITY SURVEY

Cllr Gray updated the Committee on progress, noting that he and the Chair had provided some proposed questions for the survey to the Communications team and were meeting them later in the day to discuss next steps.

16 THE CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the programme.

17 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE

The Committee noted the work programme and update, acknowledging that there was a risk that the planned PCC attendance in September may need to change given the upcoming election. The Committee requested that Anglian Water be asked for a written update instead of in person attendance in December and that UK Power Network be invited to attend the Committee in December.

The meeting ended at 11.55 am.

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Chairman