

PUBLIC BUSINESS - ITEM FOR DECISION

Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework

Summary: This report provides an update on the progress of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and Statement of Common Ground following a recent review and recommends that the Council formally endorses a revised document.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the *Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and Statement of Common Ground 2021* and the Agreements contained therein are endorsed by North Norfolk District Council**
- 2. That the Council supports and welcomes the commitment to continued co-operative working and periodic review of the framework**

Cabinet Member(s) –Cllr J Toye	Ward(s) affected
All members	All Wards
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1. Introduction

1.1 When preparing Local Plans, the Authority is subject to a number of legal and regulatory requirements. Amongst these the Council must discharge a legal ‘duty to co-operate’ with neighbouring authorities in relation to strategically important land use issues which cross administrative boundaries. The result of such co-operation is expected to be better planning outcomes. Compliance with this requirement is one of the legal tests which the Inspector will apply at Local Plan examination.

1.2 The Norfolk Authorities have a strong track record of working together with the most formal example being the preparation of a single joint Local Plan to cover Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk planning authority areas. There are many other cross boundary working arrangements such as the AONB Partnership, Biodiversity Partnership, Coastal Partnership East and a wide range of forums on which the Council is represented at either Officer or Member level. In 2015 a new county wide Strategic Planning Member forum was established with terms of reference to ensure that the Duty to Co-operate is effectively discharged.

1.3 All authorities in Norfolk including the County Council participate in the Member forum which is supported via an officer team drawn from the Councils. The forum sought and gained agreement from each of the partner authorities to prepare a planning framework document. Cabinet subsequently resolved to agree to co-

operate on strategic planning matters through the preparation of a shared non-statutory strategic planning framework, now known as the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and Statement of Common Ground (NSPF). Following the agreement to prepare a shared Framework the authorities agreed to the appointment of project management resource to co-ordinate joint planning activity. This resource, which is hosted at Norwich City Council, commenced work in late 2015 and throughout 2016 co-ordinated the work of four separate task groups which drew together evidence relating to the local economy, housing, infrastructure, and environment and delivery matters on which the framework was to be based.

1.4 This process led to the joint Member Forum considering first drafts of a vision and objectives in October 2016 to guide the subsequent drafting of the document and a consultation draft of the Framework being agreed by the Forum in July 2017. A County wide consultation ran from the 2nd August to the 22nd September 2017. The Built Heritage and Planning Policy Working Party and Cabinet considered the Consultation Draft in September 2017 and it was subsequently endorsed by North Norfolk and all other partners as a basis for policy development in each of the authorities Local Plans.

1.5 The Duty to Co-operate is an on-going and continuous process and there is a need to ensure that the Framework remains up to date. A comprehensive review of the Framework has recently been undertaken and agreed by the forum which is now requesting that each of the member authorities resolve to formally agree the document. The document has been subject to a very extensive review and update. This has included not only ensuring that the document takes account of the most recent available information but it's scope has been extended, new Agreements have been added, and additional organisations are now formal signatories to the Framework.

1.6 The full document is attached at **Appendix A**.

2. Purpose

2.1 This report sets out the key updates to the NSPF document, which when endorsed will be the third edition of the document. The NSPF document is going through a comparable endorsement procedure with all the Local Planning Authorities in Norfolk. The main updates include:

- New updated sections on: Climate Change; Health; Telecoms; & Green Infrastructure;
- A new Agreement to support the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Covid Economic Recovery Restart Plan;
- New Agreements covering climate change
- Supporting high speed Broadband provision in emerging local plans; and
- Updates / changes to existing agreements, for example, covering LPAs working towards a green infrastructure Recreation Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS).

2.2 A fuller list of the updates is included in **Appendix B**.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The NSPF continues to provide an important function in delivering sustainable Local Plans capable of supporting housing and economic growth together with the necessary enabling infrastructure and service provision. Cross-boundary cooperation is a cornerstone of the Duty to Cooperate and of the NSPF; and is of particular importance in post-Covid recovery. The new Local Plan has been prepared to accord with the Agreements of the Framework and includes a number of objectives and model policies which are being used by all authorities in Norfolk. Work on the Framework has also resulted in the introduction of common processes such as the Health Protocol which has improved consultation processes between planning and health providers.

4. Recommendations

- 1. That the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework and Statement of Common Ground 2021 and the Agreements contained therein are endorsed by North Norfolk District Council.**
- 2. That the Council supports and welcomes the commitment to continued co-operative working and periodic review of the framework.**

5. Legal Implications and Risks

5.1 It is a legal requirement to co-operate with neighbouring authorities in relation to strategically important cross boundary land use issues when preparing a Local Plan. Failure to meet this requirement could render a Local Plan unsound and result in failure at the independent examination.

6. Financial Implications and Risks

6.1 The Council currently makes an annual contribution of £10,000 towards the work of the forum to fund project management and the procurement of jointly prepared evidence. Joint commissioning of evidence produces substantial savings for individual authorities.