

## **Cabinet**

### **Minutes of the Virtual Teams Meeting held on Monday 1 February 2021 at 10am**

**Present:**

Cllr Andrew Proctor	Chairman. Leader & Cabinet Member for Strategy & Governance.
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention.
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships.
Cllr John Fisher	Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
Cllr Tom FitzPatrick	Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance.
Cllr Andy Grant	Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste.
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Greg Peck	Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management.
Cllr Graham Plant	Vice-Chairman and Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy.
Cllr Martin Wilby	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure & Transport.

**Executive Directors Present:**

James Bullion	Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Simon George	Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services
Tom McCabe	Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services and Head of Paid Service.
Sara Tough	Executive Director of Children's Services

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Cabinet meeting and advised viewers that pursuant to The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, the meeting was being held under new Regulations which had been brought in to deal with the restrictions under Covid 19. Decisions made in the meeting would have the same standing and validity as if they had been made in a meeting in County Hall.

Cabinet Members and Executive Directors formally introduced themselves.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2 Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 12 January 2021.**

- 2.1 The Chairman proposed an addition to the draft minutes, under minute item 10, titled “Progress with delivering the NCC Environmental Policy” to include a second recommendation which had been missed due to a transcribing error:
2. To revise the standard NCC Committee report template so that all reports (e.g. planning reports) consider the adopted Environmental Policy and 7 priority themes identified in the recent Natural Capital Evidence Compendium (2020).

- 2.2 With the inclusion of the additional recommendation set out in paragraph 2.1 above, Cabinet **agreed** the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **3 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4 Matters referred to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee, Select Committees or by full Council.**

There were no matters referred to Cabinet.

### **5 Items of Urgent Business**

- 5.1 The Chairman advised that w/c 1 February had been designated Children’s Mental Health Week and highlighted the Norfolk County Council emotional wellbeing campaign which would run from 1 February until 7 February. A press release would be issued shortly.

The Chairman also stressed the many challenges faced by Norfolk’s children and young people during the pandemic and praised them for the tremendous job they had done and continued to do in following the restrictions and protecting the most vulnerable people. He added that no-one could underestimate the difficult time this was for them and their families and highlighted the range of activities arranged by Norfolk County Council and the new campaign to coincide with the national awareness week.

The campaign asked young people to share how they were coping with the pandemic using #wevegotthis, to promote their wellbeing strategies to each other and highlight the positive ways they were coping. In addition, approximately 10,000 Big Norfolk feel good packs for 6-11 year olds had been distributed; a weekly wellbeing challenge was held for families with activities promoting positivity; and the weekly webinar for families which had been running since the latest lockdown would focus on emotional resilience.

All this work was to reinforce the positive actions that made a difference to people and to encourage young people to talk about their emotional wellbeing, support each other and offer ideas to help parents support their children.

The campaign was titled “We’ve got this” and young people could share their top tips through social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

### **6 Public Question Time**

6.1 The list of public questions and responses is attached to these minutes at Appendix A.

6.2 **Supplementary question from Dr Andrew Boswell:**

Dr Andrew Boswell said that his first question which related to Appendix 5 on member/officer relations had not been answered. As a supplementary question, Dr Boswell asked if the Leader, as Cabinet Member for Governance, being conflicted in this matter himself, would instruct the Monitoring Officer to immediately instigate an investigation into this prima facie contravention of the terms of the Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct.

The Chairman, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy & Governance responded that he and Dr Boswell had differing views on how officers and Members worked together, particularly in respect of the highways issue referred to. He added that better roads were a means of promoting the economy and the position taken at the Cabinet Meeting was the correct position at that time and he endorsed that view.

**7 Local Member Questions/Issues**

7.1 The list of Local Member questions and the responses is attached at Appendix B.

7.2 **Supplementary question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp**

As a supplementary question, Cllr Kemp asked if the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public health & Prevention would join her in congratulating the Queen Elizabeth vaccine hub on reaching the 11500 milestone. She asked, as the QE was refused full funding for rebuild last year, if he would do all he could to ensure King's Lynn had a new hospital as soon as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention agreed there had been incredible progress made by the NHS on their vaccination programme which was very positive. In his role as Chairman of the Health & Wellbeing Board, he would ensure lobbying to central government to support the health economy in Norfolk could continue.

7.3 **Supplementary question from Cllr Carpenter**

As a supplementary question, Cllr Carpenter asked the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management what the focus of the work being undertaken was.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services & Asset Management responded that the main priority was to make County Hall safe and accessible for everyone and that the covid pandemic had further reinforced the health and safety issues.

He added that the building in its previous condition would not have been useable, particularly for council and committee meetings, or for any public meetings as there was no ventilation system and some areas were windowless with no natural light or air.

The work to reconfigure the committee rooms and include light weight furniture which could be easily moved or removed would allow for multiple uses as well as social distancing if required in the future.

The introduction of improved eco-friendly ventilation and lighting would also save money and help towards the Council's carbon reduction target.

Unfortunately, in carrying out the work other health and safety issues had been identified such as the copper roof which had deteriorated and was no longer watertight, with water ingress over many years causing rotting roof timbers and serious damage to internal walls, which had not been visible until work had commenced. In addition, the contractor had discovered some problems with some of the remaining cladding on other parts of county hall and action had been taken immediately to ensure there was no health and safety risk to staff or members of the public, although the cladding would need to be replaced urgently.

The Cabinet Member also added that progress on the project in the public areas of county hall remained on target and within budget.

**7.4 Supplementary question from Cllr Terry Jermy**

Cllr Jermy felt it was important that Norfolk County Council lead by example when liaising with land owners and the Environment Agency on flooding issues, adding that he was aware there were a number of Norfolk County Council assets that required maintenance and which could be a contributory factor to flooding. As a supplementary question, he asked if the Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste would commit to ensuring Norfolk County Council prioritised the highways maintenance issues that could be a contributory factor to flooding, specifically the blocked drains and gullies owned by Norfolk County Council.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste responded that he would endeavour to ensure all the assets were maintained to the highest standard possible and once the flood risk reports had been published each asset would be inspected and appropriate action taken to ensure Norfolk County Council owned assets were maintained before any charge was taken against other organisations.

**7.5** The written supplementary questions submitted were responded to in writing (Appendix C).

**8 Finance Monitoring Report 2020-21 P9: December 2020**

**8.1** Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services giving a summary of the forecast financial position for the 2020-21 Revenue and Capital Budgets, General Balances, and the Council's Reserves at 31 March 2021, together with related financial information.

**8.2** The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report, during which the following points were noted:

- A small underspend of £165,000 on the net budget of £430.421m was now forecast. However, all departments were at, or near, budget due to the way the emergency grant funding had been utilised and there was no indication that the same level of funding would continue into the next financial year.
- Children's Services had identified a significant ongoing increase in covid-related costs, eg increased support to schools and education providers, or market pressure within social care and transport.
- The aftermath of the lockdown was likely to see an increase in demand for social care support and placements and the Children's Services

department had already seen an increase in demand, as well as an increase in referrals to family support teams compared to the same period in 2020.

- Adult Social Care was still forecasting a small overspend, after utilising £26m of grant funding; £27m of funding from the NHS to support hospital discharge arrangements; £3m to help pay for costs associated with lateral flow testing in care homes, as well as other support such as lost income.
- Additional costs flowing from the current year would impact on costs in the next financial year, in particular the cost of care was likely to be an ongoing issue.
- The care sector had been supported this year due to one-off funding, but given purchase of care made up approximately 77% of the Adult Social Care gross budget, there was a significant risk to next year's budget.
- Community & Environmental Services had seen a huge surge in waste recycling and garden waste volumes which had placed a strain on the service and this impact was likely to continue for the coming year.
- The provisions and reserves set out on Table 3 on page 68 of the agenda was forecast to be set at £111.8m at the start of the next financial year. This was significantly higher than assumed when the budget was set. This was due to the setting up of specific business reserves and individual reserves to deal with the additional costs likely to emerge in the next financial year and for which limited government funding was forthcoming.
- A central covid risk reserve had been created to cover further unanticipated costs, as well as known costs which were expected to continue into 2021-22.
- Norfolk's allocation of the rapid testing fund was £3.068m, as set out in table 4a on page 69 of the agenda, which also showed additional new receipts of £1.5m income compensation; a further £2m of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) money to cover the four weeks to 29 December 2020, and £600k to provide support for clinically extremely vulnerable individuals. This funding had been shared with District Councils and brought the total covid-19 funding secured by Norfolk County Council to date to £104.588m.
- Covid-related financial pressures had increased and now stood at £114.426m, leaving the net covid related pressure greater than the money received by approximately £9.838m, the details of which were set out in table 4d on page 72 and in revenue annex 2 on page 85 of the agenda.
- The overall breakdown of over- and underspends to date was set out in the revenue appendix on page 80 of the agenda.

8.3 The Chairman referred to the COMF budget, the details of which were set out in the table on page 72 of the agenda and which referred to the forecast allocation which Cabinet was being asked to agree in recommendation 2. He added that the Engagement Board had agreed the allocation after significant discussions with the Health Protection Board. For clarification, it was noted that in recommendation 3 item 1 set out the money received to date and item 2 was the money likely to be received to the end of March 2021. The ongoing money was approximately £3.9m per month and considerable discussions were taking place to ensure this money was allocated across all partners working through the Health Protection Board and Engagement Board to attain the maximum benefit for Norfolk.

8.4 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention offered his condolences to everyone who had been affected by the pandemic. He also gave

his thanks to all the staff in Adult Social Care and Public Health departments for the incredible commitment they had shown in supporting Norfolk through the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member congratulated the Senior Management Team in Adult Social Care for achieving a £1m overspend which remained stable, adding that although it was a large figure at £1m, it represented less than 1% of the total budget for Adult Social Care. Further details could be found on page 63 of the agenda. Given the strain on services this year, he felt this was an incredible achievement and thanked the team involved.

- 8.5 The Chairman endorsed the comments made.
- 8.6 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services acknowledged pressures would be placed on Children's Services after the pandemic due to the social impact on families and young people and the slight delay in the transformation programme in Children's Services due to staff concentrating on dealing with the covid pandemic. He thanked staff for their work and flexibility throughout the pandemic.
- 8.7 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance welcomed the report, particularly over a year that no one could have forecast. He noted that Norfolk County Council was still innovating and transforming its processes to deliver services for Norfolk and he also thanked staff for all the work they had done.
- 8.8 In summing up and moving the recommendations, the Cabinet Member for Finance endorsed the comments and thanks to staff for delivering services to Norfolk residents during the pandemic.
- 8.9 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. **approve** proposed additional transfer of £1m to the corporate Covid Risk Reserve as set out in paragraph 2.46 of Appendix 1.
  2. **approve** the forecast allocation of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) budget as set out in paragraph 5.13 of Appendix 1.
  3. (a) **approve** the continuation of financial support to providers as described in section 5, including specifically grants described in paragraphs 5.8 and 5.14 of Revenue Appendix 1, consistent with detailed government guidance relating to the latest lockdown and (b) **delegate authority to relevant Cabinet members** to make decisions relating to the ongoing measures that are still needed to support providers for the remainder of 2020-21, subject to those payments remaining within the remaining budgets, and Covid-19 funding available for that purpose.
  4. **Note** that the Council has received £0.602m of funding to provide support to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable individuals, and that further allocations are due to be received for the January / February 2021 lockdown period, and to agree that this will be used for the purposes set out by MHCLG in their guidance to local authorities, as summarised in Appendix 1 paragraphs 5.5-5.7.
  5. **Note** the period 9 general fund forecast revenue underspend of £0.165m noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to reduce or eliminate potential over-spends;

6. **Note** the COVID-19 grant funding received of £104.588m, the proposed use of that funding, and the related expenditure pressures resulting in net Covid-19 pressure, of £9.838m taking into account proposed transfers to the Corporate Risk reserve.
7. **Note** the period 9 forecast shortfall in savings of £17.580m, noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to mitigate savings shortfalls through alternative savings or underspends;
8. **Note** the forecast General Balances at 31 March 2021 of £19.706m, before taking into account any over/under spends;
9. **Note** the expenditure and funding of the revised current and future 2020-23 capital programmes.

#### 8.10 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Two appendices are attached to this report giving details of the forecast revenue and capital financial outturn positions:

**Appendix 1** summarises the revenue outturn position, including:

- Forecast over and under spends
- Covid-19 pressures and associated grant income
- Changes to the approved budget
- Reserves
- Savings
- Treasury management
- Payment performance and debt recovery.

**Appendix 2** summarises the capital outturn position, and includes:

- Current and future capital programmes
- Capital programme funding
- Income from property sales and other capital receipts.

#### 8.11 **Alternative Options**

In order to deliver a balanced budget, no viable alternative options have been identified to the recommendations in this report. In terms of financing the proposed capital expenditure, no grant or revenue funding has been identified to fund the expenditure.

### 9 **Norfolk County Council Revenue Budget 2021-22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021-25.**

- 9.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services which formed a key part of the strategic and financial planning framework for the Council. It built on reports received by Cabinet through 2020 in June, September and October to set out the detailed Revenue Budget proposals for 2021-22.
- 9.2 The Executive Director of Finance placed on record his thanks to the Finance Team, officers and Members across the Council for their effort in pulling the budget together, particularly with the virtual working arrangements over the last year. The sentiment was echoed by the Chairman.
- 9.3 The Chairman introduced the report, during which the following points were noted:

- Producing a budget of this size and complexity was no easy task and thanks were given for the work put in by officers and Members. The work involved was highlighted on pages 99-100 of the agenda.
- The report included both the revenue budget for next year and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The Chairman was satisfied that a balanced and robust budget for 2021-22 could be recommended by Cabinet to Council for adoption at its meeting on 22 February 2021.
- The backdrop for setting a balanced budget for 2021-22 was very different to previous years as the long-term funding from government was unknown.
- There had been some suggestions about using reserves instead of increasing council tax, which had been dismissed as once reserves had been used they were gone forever.
- Local Government had responded magnificently during the past year following the covid pandemic and lessons had been learned during that time, including working better together with public bodies, the NHS, the care sector, the voluntary sector, businesses etc.
- The Chairman added his thanks to everyone for the work they had done during the pandemic and which they continued to do.
- The challenges of delivering high quality services for Adult Social Care and Children's Services were noted, the costs of which were increasing as Norfolk's demographics were changing. A radical change by central government about how local government was funded was long overdue as well as investment in services.
- The commentary in section 3 of the report on page 114 set out the strategy, highlighting the significant amount of work being done to transform services which would underpin the Together for Norfolk business plan.
- Although there was a lot of work to be done, the County Council would play a leading role in that work.
- A full consultation on the budget proposals had taken place and the responses received from residents and communities was set out in the report on page 272.
- A full equality and rural impact assessment had been undertaken, the details of which were set out on page 336 of the agenda, with the particular findings against various proposals set out from page 341. These would be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations on the budget proposals. Overall, there was no evidence to indicate budget proposals would have a disproportionate or detrimental effect on residents and communities.
- The need to use public money in the best and most efficient way possible was highlighted and the Administration was confident the finances of the council were under control, despite the hard choices which were needed to achieve a balanced budget.

9.4 The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the detail of the report during which the following points were noted:

- Setting a budget during this fast-changing situation had been extremely challenging and the Cabinet Member thanked the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and his team for their achievement.



- The covid-19 pandemic had affected all aspects of life and the impact would continue to be felt in the future. Individuals, families, businesses and community groups were all experiencing the strain, with some of the most vulnerable people being affected the most.
- Local Authorities faced a growing gap between funding levels and service demand with rising cost pressures, driven partly by demographic changes and by unfunded burdens such as the national living wage and by the needs of vulnerable social care users becoming increasingly complex.
- Limited additional core funding had been made available to local authorities in the 2020 one-year spending review. The widely publicised 4.5% increase in core spending power was based on a Government assumption that council tax would be raised by the maximum 5% permitted. Less than 20% of the increase in core spending power would be centrally funded, with the remainder coming from council tax increases.
- The overall net budget proposed by Norfolk County Council would increase from £430.421m to £439.094m in 2021-22. A reported £10m drop in the collection fund forecast from District Councils had reduced the total funds available, partly due to rising levels of hardship due to the pandemic and the concurrent increase in people seeking government support.
- Table 2 on page 121 explained how investment in Adult Social Care services would increase by £28m to meet cost pressures and enabling the County Council to develop its central theme of supporting people to be independent, resilient and well.
- As part of the 2020-21 budget, £28m was invested in Children's Services to support vulnerable families. In addition, a £13m in-year overspend from 2019-20 was covered to accelerate the department's transformation strategy. As a result of the invest to save initiative, savings were starting to emerge.
- Community & Environmental Services remained at the heart of Norfolk communities.
- As the commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030 policy progressed an ambitious environmental policy was starting to unfold.
- Significant economic support would be required as the economy was restarted. OBR analysis showed Norfolk could see an approximate 3% loss of GDP; possible loss of approximately 4000 jobs and a reduction of 3-6% in average wages. Therefore, support and delivery of the economic recovery and restart plan would be key, as would the capital project investment.
- Despite constraints, as lead local flood authority, the council was bringing together key stakeholders in flood management which had been backed with an additional £350k revenue budget and a £1.5m emergency contingency fund in case of flooding, both coastal and county.
- The ability to make investment decisions, both reactively to cope with the pandemic and proactively to overcome the aftermath had been enabled by the Together for Norfolk plan, which provided a clear roadmap on how the Council would deliver its priorities; drive economic growth; improve social mobility; underwrite a better quality of life both environmentally and better outcomes generally for Norfolk people.
- The revenue budget and the medium-term financial strategy was entirely focussed on supporting the Council's ambitions.

- The Norfolk Futures programme which was in its third year was already delivering on supporting the strategy in dealing with the complex demographic and societal changes faced.
- The report sets out how the primary goal was to ensure children had the best start in life; vulnerable people were protected; strong infrastructure was in place to support a vibrant economy; and services were transformed to ensure they were delivered to make Norfolk an even better place to live and work.
- Table 10 on page 131 highlighted how the response to covid would affect and possibly delay transformation programmes which was just one of the risks accounted for in the budget assumptions.
- The three key spending departments faced cost pressures totalling approximately £45.7m which would need to be met in the forthcoming budget.
- As well as general inflation totalling approximately £18m caused mainly by contract and price inflation, there were specific pressures in Norfolk due to an older population, one of the factors which would lead to an approximate £13m increase in the costs of delivering services.
- A further £10.5m from unfunded changes in legislation, particularly the national living wage was highlighted in table 10 as well as the concerns that the transformation programmes in Children's Services and Adult Social Care would be delayed.
- Other anticipated key risks included:
  - In **Adult Social Care** – since March 2020, the funding arrangements for supporting people after hospital discharge meant that the Council supported health and social care placements for a period of time, with costs reclaimed from the NHS. However, funding beyond the end of March 2021 was expected to cease, but due to the current wave and escalation of cases, demand was not likely to stop at the year end, which put immediate financial pressure on the Council.
  - An above average fee uplift was agreed by Cabinet in January 2021 to take account of the latest information on the national living wage and inflation. However, this did not take account of the temporary costs for providers relating to the pandemic and it was proposed that these costs were managed separately, in the hope that Government would announce an extension of the infection control fund, however this remained an area of risk.
  - Purchase of care accounted for approximately 77% of the Adult Social Care gross budget. The cost of new care packages had increased during the pandemic and although prices may stabilise as the impact of the pandemic decreased, the pressure would remain acute during the financial year.
  - The Social Care Grant for 2020-21 totalled £30.342m, but the level of increase was lower than previous years.
  - **Children's Services** had seen a shift in demand as the school sector required additional support from local government. Although this shift was encouraged by central government, it could lead to increased pressure on staff resources in future.
  - A rise in demand for family support following the pandemic was expected.
  - An increased demand for, and increased costs of, supporting SEND home to school transport during the pandemic was unlikely to subside.

- Voluntary sector organisations relied on by children's services had found fundraising impossible during the pandemic, although demand for services had increased and this was likely to be an ongoing cost in Children's Services.
- **Community & Environmental Services** budget had been impacted by the loss of income, partly mitigated by the Local Government Income Compensation Scheme which would cease in June 2021.
- Waste services had experienced a surge in the volume of waste, recycling and garden waste.
- As a result of these, and other unknown pressures, £18.829m had been set aside to offset any funding shocks and cost pressures and to help restart the economy.
- Non-ring-fenced funding had also been added to specific departmental reserves in 2020-21 to deal with known additional costs, alongside capital provision outlined in agenda item 10.
- Although the budget process commenced with a forecast deficit of £38m, the proposals enabled a continuing focus on allowing Adult Social Care services to respond to the people who needed the service; and on supporting more children to remain at home, delivering help directly to families that needed it.

#### **Consultation process:**

- A full consultation had taken place, including to parish councils via a presentation hosted by Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC).
- 500 responses to the consultation were received, many of which represented groups, and was over double the number of responses received the previous year.
- The results of the consultation endorsed the key decisions with just over half of the respondents agreeing with the proposal to increase council tax by 1.99% and the majority also agreeing with a 2% increase in the social care precept.
- The consultation results did not support changes to household waste recycling hours, so this proposal had been removed.

#### **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

- The primary objective of the Medium Term Financial strategy 2021-25 was to show a balanced budget over a 4 year period. Currently further savings or additional revenue funding would need to be identified for future years which was usual at this stage in the process.
- A balanced budget was proposed for 2021-22 although gaps remained in subsequent years, with an overall deficit in the MTFS of £91.414m which was similar to gaps in previous years.
- A range of reforms in government funding were required urgently, including the fair funding review; business rates reform; and addressing high needs block funding. Cabinet urged government to bring forward these reforms at the earliest opportunity to ensure robust and sustainable funding of Children's Services and Adult Social Care on a permanent basis.
- Cabinet would continue to lobby government, advocate for Norfolk and press the government for a fair share of Local Authority funding and to bring forward long overdue reforms for social care funding.

9.5 In supporting the proposals, the Cabinet Member of Innovation, Transformation & Performance echoed the need to lobby government for a reform of local government funding and highlighted the work done by Norfolk County Council in adapting to changing circumstances by being innovative and transforming services and although some transformation programmes had been delayed, they were progressing as soon as possible. Services were still being delivered despite the difficulties faced with the pandemic.

9.6 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention endorsed the budget proposals and highlighted the £28m cost pressures in the Adult Social Care department, resulting partly from the demographic changes in Norfolk and people living longer, and endorsed the need for a national funding solution, adding that Norfolk would continue to deliver the best services it could with the money available.

The budget plans recognised the immediate need to ensure people were safeguarded as well as recognising the ongoing need to utilise one-off government funding as part of the covid 19 response and the requirement to continue to monitor the costs.

Adult Social Care was investing in excellence in social work which would help people retain and regain independence in turn preventing the need for formal social care.

The use of technology to enable more people to live independently for longer was also being increased.

9.7 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy supported the proposals and congratulated the officers and Cabinet Member involved. He highlighted some of the growth and development work undertaken this year, during which the following points were noted:

- Growth and Development officers met weekly with the Local Enterprise Partnership and District Councils to address issues affecting businesses and work to promote and distribute available grants. This included the small business grant fund from Government which District Councils had distributed to more than 50% of Norfolk and Suffolk businesses and £6.1m business resilience and recovery grant scheme.
- In response to the pandemic work was quickly commenced with the LEP and District Councils to develop recovery plans at county level. A key priority of the plans was to set up a £6.75m Norfolk Strategic Fund for projects and grants.
- The first project developed was a £2.2m tourism sector support package to help businesses reopen safely after the end of the first lockdown in July 2020. Each district, as well as Visit Norfolk Tourism Partnership distributed their own grant allocation.
- £17m from the Government Get Building Fund was also secured for capital projects, including £6m for the offshore wind operations and maintenance base at Great Yarmouth and £2.7m for the food innovation hub at Honingham.
- Support to help businesses grow was underpinned by the programmes and a new £9m leader programme had delivered almost 200 projects.

- The Low Carbon Innovation Fund 2 programme developed with the University of East Anglia sought to invest £11m in ventures in Norfolk, Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire to make measurable reductions in greenhouse gases and the first projects had already been agreed.
- The innovative mentoring programme to help businesses access government innovation funding was launched in November 2020 to help businesses increase their online presence which was critical to their viability and growth.
- The Go Digital programme provided a one to one consultancy service and had helped 40 small and medium enterprises and work was being carried out with District Councils to try to secure funding for additional sessions.
- Webinars for businesses had been held and had been well attended. Topics such as food and drink; tourism; technology; cyber security and public sector procurement had been covered, with follow up online sessions allowing businesses to focus on those issues which were most relevant to their business.
- Norfolk County Council had successful bid to become a gateway organisation for the government kickstart scheme and proposals for 108 placements had been submitted to date.
- The £5m chances programme sought to help 2600 people back into employment, with the programme launching next month.
- This year had seen the refresh of the countywide local transport plan which would run until 2035. Central to the delivery of the plan priorities was the transforming cities programme which had secured £59m for sustainable transport, including £32m for the County Council.
- £1.5m had been secured from the Government Active Travel Fund for social distancing measures to help pedestrians and cyclists and help businesses to reopen safely after the first lockdown.
- In November 2020 the government had approved a funding application for the Great Yarmouth 3<sup>rd</sup> River Crossing of £120m with a new lifting bridge to link the A47 to the port and the enterprise zone, easing congestion and shortening journey times.
- The focus in 2021-22 would be on digital sector support, helping people into jobs and training; sustainable transport and responding to the needs of the economy.
- Work would continue in the future to support development of the County Farms estate with Cabinet receiving a report in January 2021 about the purchase of additional land at Outwell.
- New investment included £1m for the Great Yarmouth Operations and Maintenance Campus; providing match government grant of £6.7m for the Long Stratton Bypass; £4m for replacement libraries in King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth; and a £15m loan to Repton to support delivery of housing in Norfolk.

The Cabinet Member noted that the points highlighted above would ensure the County Council worked towards growing the economy as quickly as possible after the pandemic.

- 9.8 The Chairman agreed it was important to recognise the work done and which would be done in future to rebuild the economy.

- 9.9 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management endorsed and supported the report and congratulated the Cabinet Member for Finance for producing a balanced budget in these difficult times without cutting services.

Cabinet noted that Norfolk County Council had chosen to invest in NCC companies, particularly Hethel and Repton. These investments would provide income for the County Council but would also support employment and encourage business start-ups and business relocations in Norfolk, all of which supported the Build Back Better campaign.

Covid had accelerated a number of existing programmes, including agreeing terms on the sale of Carrow House which would allow approximately 400 staff, the Coroners Court and the Youth Offending Team to relocate to County Hall. This would ensure more efficient use of buildings and the estate and help reduce running costs and help to achieve the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The County Farms Estate continued to contribute to the rural economy and the environment, but it also provided a net annual return of approximately £2.4m to the Norfolk tax payer.

- 9.10 The Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste added his support for the budget and highlighted the aim to be ambitious with the Environment Policy reflected in the report. He also highlighted the commitment made to flooding and the £1.5m in the reserve; the new posts created to help deal with flooding; the new recycling centres which were progressing and which should open in 2022; resources for additional tree planting; the additional Members budget, all of which would help to meet the environmental challenges faced.

- 9.11 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services endorsed the budget proposals, adding that Children's Services would continue its transformation programme and, despite the anticipated pressures on the services, was confident it could deliver the savings identified with the transformation programme.

- 9.12 The Chairman noted the comments made about producing the budget which was very complex, with emphasis on it being a balanced and robust budget.

The prudence of setting money aside for known pressures was noted including investment in future services; promoting independence; being innovative; partnership working; growing the economy; environmental issues, particularly how we intend to respond to the key issues over recent times with the flooding issue.

All of the above highlighted the work carried out by local government and also the need for future funding security and Cabinet noted lobbying of MPs and Government would continue to achieve a fair settlement for Norfolk.

- 9.13 In moving the recommendations, the Cabinet Member for Finance thanked Cabinet for the comments.

- 9.14 Cabinet considered and reviewed the report and **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) **note** the statements regarding the uncertain planning environment, robustness of budget estimates, assumptions and risks relating to the 2021-22 budget, **and authorise the** Executive Director of Finance and

Commercial Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, to make any changes required to reflect Final Local Government Finance Settlement information (if available), or changes in council tax and business rates forecasts from District Councils, in order to maintain a balanced budget position for presentation to Full Council. For the avoidance of doubt, to enable a final balanced Budget position to be recommended to County Council, Cabinet **agreed** that any additional resources which become available will be added to the Corporate Business Risk Reserve, and any income shortfall will be addressed from the Corporate Business Risk Reserve (to the extent possible).

- 2) **note** the findings of public consultation as set out in Appendix 5, and consider these when recommending the budget changes required to deliver a balanced budget as set out in Appendix 1.
- 3) **note** the findings of equality and rural assessments, as set out in Appendix 6 to this report, and in doing so, note the council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 4) **note** that the council has responded to the consultation undertaken on the provisional Settlement.
- 5) **note** the decision by Norfolk Leaders, acting as the Pool Board, to withdraw from 2021- 22 Business Rates pooling as set out in section 9 of Appendix 1.
- 6) **agree** the council's assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code as detailed in section 15 of Appendix 1.
- 7) **agree to recommend to County Council:**
  - a) The level of risk and budget assumptions set out in the Robustness of Estimates report (Appendix 4), which underpin the revenue and capital budget decisions and planning for 2021-25.
  - b) The principle of seeking to increase general fund balances as part of closing the 2020-21 accounts and that in 2021-22:
    - i) any grant funding received from the Local Tax Income Guarantee scheme be added to the Corporate Business Risk Reserve to offset tax income losses resulting from COVID-19 as they arise;
    - ii) any further additional resources which become available during the year should be added to the general fund balance wherever possible.
  - c) The findings of public consultation (Appendix 5), which should be considered when agreeing the 2021-22 Budget (Appendix 1).

- d) An overall County Council Net Revenue Budget of £439.094m for 2021-22, including budget increases of £127.170m and budget decreases of -£118.498m as set out in Table 11 of Appendix 1, and the actions required to deliver the proposed savings, subject to any changes required in line with recommendation 1 above to enable a balanced budget to be proposed.
- e) The budget proposals set out for 2022-23 to 2024-25, including authorising Executive Directors to take the action required to deliver budget savings for 2022-23 to 2024-25 as appropriate.
- f) With regard to the future years, that further plans to meet the remaining budget shortfalls in the period 2022-23 to 2024-25 are developed and brought back to Cabinet during 2021-22.
- g) To note the advice of the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services (Section 151 Officer), in section 7 of Appendix 1, on the financial impact of an increase in council tax, and confirm, or otherwise, the assumptions that:
  - i) the council's 2021-22 budget will include a general council tax increase of 1.99% and a 2.00% increase in the Adult Social Care precept, an overall increase of 3.99% (shown in section 7 of Appendix 1), and for 2022-23 a 1.00% Adult Social Care precept (being a partial deferral of the 2021-22 Adult Social Care precept), based on the current discretions offered by Government and as recommended by the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services.
  - ii) the council's budget planning in future years will include general council tax increases of 1.99% for planning purposes, as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS Table 4 in Appendix 2). These council tax assumptions have regard to the level of referendum threshold expected to be set for the year and take into account the Government's historic assumptions that local authorities will raise the maximum council tax available to them. Notwithstanding any decision to defer a portion of the Adult Social Care precept, the final level of council tax for future years is subject to Member decisions annually.
  - iii) Beyond the 1.00% deferral of the Adult Social Care precept, no further increases in the Adult Social Care precept for 2022-23 onwards are assumed based on current Government policy, but that these will be subject to Member decisions annually within and informed by any parameters defined by the Government.
  - iv) if the referendum threshold were increased in the period 2022-23 to 2024-25 to above 1.99%, or any further discretion were offered to increase the Adult Social Care precept (or similar), then it is likely that the Section 151 Officer would recommend the council take full advantage of any flexibility in view of the council's overall financial position as set out in the assumptions in section 6 of Appendix 1.
- h) That the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services be authorised to transfer from the County Fund to the Salaries and General Accounts all sums necessary in respect of revenue and capital expenditure provided in the 2021-22 Budget, to make payments, to raise and repay loans, and to invest funds.



- i) **agree** the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25 as set out in Appendix 2, including the two policy objectives to be achieved:
  - i) Revenue: To identify further funding or savings for 2022-23 to 2024-25 to produce a balanced budget in all years 2021-25 in accordance with the timetable set out in the Revenue Budget report (Table 1 of Appendix 1).
  - ii) Capital: To provide a framework for identifying and prioritising capital requirements and proposals to ensure that all capital investment is targeted at meeting the Council's priorities.
- j) The mitigating actions proposed in the equality and rural impact assessments (Appendix 6).
- k) Note the planned reduction in non-schools earmarked and general reserves of 43.0% over five years, from £113.949m (March 2020) to £64.953m (March 2025) (Reserves Table 6 in Appendix 3);
- l) Note the policy on reserves and provisions in Section 3 of Appendix 3;
- m) Agree, based on current planning assumptions and risk forecasts set out in Appendix 3:
  - i) for 2021-22, a minimum level of general balances of £19.706m, and
  - ii) a forecast minimum level for planning purposes of
    - 2022-23, £21.206m;
    - 2023-24, £22.706m; and
    - 2024-25, £24.206m.

as part of the consideration of the budget plans for 2021-25, reflecting the transfer of risk from Central to Local Government, and supporting recommendations;
- n) Agree the use of non-school Earmarked Reserves, as set out in Reserves Table 5 of Appendix 3.

## 9.15 Evidence and Reasons for Decision:

- 9.15.1 Through the course of 2020-21, the council has faced an unprecedented and ongoing financial and public health crisis which has had significant implications for budget setting. It remains critical to engage with Government and other stakeholders to ensure adequate and sustainable funding for Norfolk to continue to deliver vital services to residents, businesses and visitors. Government announcements, including funding allocations for 2021-22 have informed financial planning assumptions, but it remains to be confirmed whether these are sufficient to address ongoing COVID-19 costs in 2021-22 and beyond. The Council's MTFS planning builds on the position agreed in February 2020 and this has been continually updated as more reliable information about cost pressures and funding impacts has emerged through the process.
- 9.15.2 The full suite of information and evidence to support the council's 2021-22 budget proposals is laid out in the appended papers. The Cabinet needs to recommend a budget in order for the council to fulfil the legal requirement to set a balanced budget for 2021-22 and determine the level of council tax for the year. The need to identify savings is driven by both service cost pressures, and the wider funding position of local government as set out elsewhere in the appended papers.
- 9.15.3 The proposals in this report are informed by the council's constitution, local government legislation, best practice recommendations for financial and strategic

planning (including the CIPFA Financial Management Code) and feedback from residents and other stakeholders via the public consultation on the 2021-22 Budget as detailed within this report.

## **9.16 Alternative Options**

9.16.1 The papers appended to this report represent the culmination of the process to develop detailed budgets and saving proposals for 2021-22 to be recommended to Full Council. However, at this stage it remains the case that no proposals have been agreed, meaning that a range of alternative options remain open.

9.16.2 In particular, there are a number of areas where Cabinet could choose to consider different parameters for the budget and recommendations to Full Council, such as:

- Varying the level of council tax and/or Adult Social Care precept for 2021-22, cognisant of the referendum principles for the year, and the implications for the level of savings to be found and the overall budget position;
- Considering alternative saving proposals, taking into account the time constraints required to develop proposals, undertake public consultation (where necessary), and meet statutory deadlines for the setting of council tax.
- Changing other assumptions within the MTFS (including reducing assumptions about budget pressures or varying the level of council tax) and therefore altering the level of savings required in future years.

9.16.3 The deliverability of the overall budget and saving proposals is kept under review by the Section 151 Officer in order to advise on final budget setting proposals. Final decisions on the Budget need to be taken by the County Council in February 2021 informed by final Local Government Finance Settlement figures, forecasts supplied by District Councils, and the findings of EQIA and public consultation activity.

## **10 Capital Strategy & Programme 2021-22**

10.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services presenting the proposed capital strategy and programme and including information on the funding available to support the programme. The paper also summarised the development of the proposed capital programme, including proposed new schemes and a summary of forecast capital receipts.

10.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:

- The summary of current and proposed investment plans was set out on page 470 of the agenda, including an additional £102m in new schemes, and the £435m investment within the current programme. The schemes were aimed at supporting the economy, promoting health and wellbeing and giving people a strong sense of community.
- The commitment to rebuilding the economy was underpinned by existing programmes which were listed on page 500, appendix C.
- There was a range of additional projects to boost the economy, help manage change in the environment, promote wellbeing and health and

strengthen core community hubs, all of which were set out in Appendix D of the report.

- Investment in County Farms of £2.5m, added to the recent purchase of land at Outwell, and the additional £15m financing of Repton to build homes where needed in Norfolk, which would help grow the economy.
- Hethel would receive finance to support the next stage of its development as well £8m for the expansion of Scottow Enterprise Park.
- The operations and maintenance facility in Great Yarmouth and the development of 4000 housing scheme outside King's Lynn at West Norfolk were also included in the programme.
- Infrastructure to support the economy included the Great Yarmouth 3<sup>rd</sup> River Crossing; the Long Stratton Bypass and £10m to pay for ultra-fast connectivity to over 400 public sector sites around the county, providing next generation access to broadband across Norfolk.
- The projects added to the £100m investment being made in schools and SEND schools and supported the Children's Services transformation programme by investing in small residential homes for vulnerable children.
- Investment in health and wellbeing would be seen through the launch of the greenways project and from the expansion and renewal of the Norfolk Trails and local footpaths, as well as £8m to develop the Norwich Castle Keep project.
- To support the environmental programme a pilot scheme within the area of outstanding natural beauty was being proposed to change the way people accessed the area as well as over £2m to be spent to improve recycling centres across the county.
- Capital support of nearly £2m for flood repairs was also included, with a further £300k available for flood repair on top of the £1.8m in the revenue budget.
- An additional £2.5m was being invested in the fire service and the development of Gressenhall being made into an environmental hub, as well as the work required to deal with ash dieback.
- The local member fund would be increased from £6k to £10k and would be available to local parishes and communities to fund environmental projects such as tree planting, providing EV charging points, or repairing local, less frequently used footpaths.
- Norfolk Libraries were acknowledged as invaluable support to communities and £4m had been allocated to upgrade King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth Libraries, as well as Dereham Library into community hubs supporting Adult Social Care and Children's services. Plans were also underway to provide similar services in Watton and Hunstanton in the future.
- The Capital programme underpinned the long-term commitment to build a stronger, sustainable and unified county of Norfolk.

- 10.4 The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management highlighted the capital investments to support semi-independent living for young people and updating the fire service estate to ensure it remained useable.

The continued investment in NCC companies was welcomed and the policy of investing in sustainable Norfolk-based companies would not only produce a return for the Council but also supported the Build Back Better Initiative by increasing jobs and business growth in the county.

Regarding the sale of assets, the Cabinet Member noted that assets were regularly reviewed to ensure their ongoing use supported the future priorities of the Council. Assets which did not meet the criteria had been identified and formed the basis of a continually updated disposal scheme.

The County Farms estate, following the three recent acquisitions, was being maintained in excess of the minimum 16.5k acres required in the Norfolk County Council Constitution and now stood at 17.49 acres. Although there had been a significant backlog of repairs and maintenance across the estate, these were now being addressed, although it would have a consequent effect on the estate's ability to make a better revenue contribution to the County Council. The programme of planned improvements was continuing, funded from the capital programme for larger schemes and from the trading account for revenue improvements, and investment in the estate would help to further enhance future revenue contributions.

The County Farms estate generated approximately £2.4m annual rental income for the County Council, which was projected to rise to £2.44m in 2021-22.

In supporting the recommendations in the report, the Cabinet Member noted there were a number of excellent initiatives planned to help Build Back Better, ongoing delivery of services and infrastructure for Norfolk residents.

- 10.5 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport supported the recommendations, adding that he was particularly pleased to see the investment in infrastructure projects including the Norwich Western Link; the Great Yarmouth 3<sup>rd</sup> River Crossing; the Long Stratton Bypass and the additional investment in broadband access across the county.

The Cabinet Member also welcomed the addition to the local Members budget which would enable local councillors to work with their residents to improve their infrastructure and safety through highways schemes. He also highlighted the parish partnership scheme and the work carried out with town and parish councils to complete their local priorities projects. The additional funding for upgrading streetlights across the county which would help the environmental policy was also welcomed, as well as the additional funding for flood improvements.

- 10.6 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention endorsed the previous comments on the capital strategy and drew attention to the capital spend within Adult Social Care of an additional four year commitment of £37m to support the extra care housing, living well disabled programme for older people.

The Cabinet Member was also pleased to see an additional £19.7m as an extension of the living well housing for disabled adults which was expected to leverage approximately 130 places. If Cabinet approved the budget, a report would be presented to a future Cabinet meeting outlining how the money would be spent to support disabled adults living in Norfolk.

- 10.7 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships highlighted the Norwich Castle Keep project which was progressing well and would provide more interesting facilities and increased funding when visitors returned. The successful move of the Attleborough library to larger premises where it was able to become an information centre and help hub was also highlighted and it was noted Great

Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Dereham and Hunstanton libraries would receive capital funding so they could offer similar services in future.

- 10.8 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance endorsed the report and recommendations, noting the rapid progress of the SEND school in Fakenham which would fill a much needed gap in the service. He also highlighted the next generation broadband project which was essential in rural areas and would allow people to access opportunities such as job vacancies and learning opportunities.
- 10.9 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services welcomed the report highlighting that Children's Services would be modifying a couple of premises to meet the requirement of the "New Route" initiative which would commence in June 2021 and which should help to deliver savings and offer a better service for the children and young people.
- 10.10 The Chairman noted the investment Norfolk County Council was putting into Norfolk as well as the local initiatives included in the capital strategy.
- 10.11 The Cabinet Member for Finance thanked Cabinet for the comments made and moved the recommendations in the report.
- 10.12 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
- 1) **agree** the Capital Strategy at Appendix A as a framework for the prioritisation and continued development of the Council's capital programme;
  - 2) **agree** the proposed 2021-25+ capital programme of £537.660m, subject to additional amounts for schemes yet to be re-profiled from 2020-21;
  - 3) **refer the programme** to the County Council for approval, including the new and extended capital schemes outlined in Appendix D;
  - 4) **recommend to County Council** the Council's Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2021-22 as set out in Section 5;
  - 5) **note** known grant settlements as summarised in Section 3 and agree that future capital grants will be added to the programme when confirmed;
  - 6) **note** the estimated capital receipts to be generated, subject to market conditions, over the next four years to support schemes not funded from other sources, as set out in Table 5.

10.13 **Evidence and reasons for Decision**

The attached Annex summarises the development of the proposed capital programme, including proposed new schemes, and a summary of forecast capital receipts.

10.14 **Alternative Options**

The papers appended to this report represent the culmination of the process to develop capital schemes to be recommended to Full Council which will improve services, promote efficiencies and address deficiencies. However, at this stage it remains the case that new capital proposals have not been agreed, and could be removed from the proposed capital programme.

Cabinet adjourned at 11.48 am and reconvened at 11.55am.

## **11 Annual Investment and Treasury Strategy 2021-22**

11.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services presenting the Council's borrowing and investment strategies for 2021-22.

11.2 The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:

- The Council was required to operate a balanced budget each year.
- The treasury function assisted the achievement of a balanced budget by minutely monitoring cash flow and ensuring cash was available when needed.
- Surplus money was invested in liquid, low risk assets and treasury was responsible for funding planned capital investment and making sure that repayment obligations were met over the longer term.
- The Treasury Management Strategy covered our capital expenditure plans and monitoring checks and the minimum revenue provision policy which was the amount we had to provide to ensure we could repay our debts when they were due.
- The Council's external debt for the five years to 2023-24 was set out on page 523 of the agenda. By the end of March 2022 the debt was estimated to be £855.4m.
- The Treasury Management function operated a number of key indicators to ensure the Council operated within prudential boundaries. These were detailed in the report, but the main ones specified an operational boundary ensuring that external debt was lower than the authorised limit which represented a statutory controlled ceiling beyond which we could not borrow. The Council was well within both these boundaries, the details of which were set out in Appendix 5 on page 541.
- Interest rates were currently at an all-time low. Whilst this made finding returns difficult, it made the cost of borrowing attractive. Our external treasury advisor long term forecast for base rate was 2% and public works loan board rates were below that. 50 year money was currently approx. 1.3%. Short term money was less than this and opportunities would be considered to borrow in this area either by the PWLB or the Municipal Bond Agency.
- From an investment perspective, low interest rate returns meant that it was sensible to utilise balances to cover cash flow over short-term periods rather than borrow in blocks and therefore, we tended to be under funded in the coming year.
- The investment strategy was bound by tight criteria defining investment, credit worthiness and nationality of counterparties. Any investments in commercial activities, eg wholly owned commercial companies, were classified as non-treasury investments and were not included in the report as they were classified as capital expenditure. However, the cost of the expenditure would impact on the overall borrowing requirement. The commercial activities were listed in appendix 10.

11.3 The Chairman highlighted the key point about the cost of borrowing being low at the moment and the tendency for most authorities to go to the Public Works Loan

Board for borrowing requirements. The reference to the UK Municipal Bonds Agency was noted as a possible source of future borrowing, and its bonds had recently beaten the PWLB by at least 5 basis points. The market was keen to see green and social bonds come forward in terms of local authority borrowing.

11.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- **endorse and recommend to County Council** the Annual Investment and Treasury Strategy for 2021-22 at Annex 1, including:
  - the capital prudential indicators included in the body of the report;
  - the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2021-22 at Appendix 1;
  - the list of approved counterparties at Appendix 4;
  - the treasury management prudential indicators detailed in Appendix 5.

11.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The primary objectives of the Council's Investment and Treasury Strategy are to safeguard the timely repayment of principal and interest, whilst ensuring adequate liquidity for cash flow and the generation of investment yield. A flexible approach to borrowing for capital purposes will be maintained both in terms of timing, and in terms of possible sources of borrowing including the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) and the UK Municipal Bonds Agency (UKMBA). This strategy is prudent while investment returns are low and the investment environment remains challenging.

The Investment and Treasury Strategy summarises:

- the Council's capital plans (including prudential indicators);
- a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
- the treasury management strategy (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised) including treasury indicators; and
- an investment strategy (including parameters on how investments are to be managed).

11.6 **Alternative Options**

In order to achieve sound treasury management in accordance with the statutory and other guidance, no viable alternative options have been identified to the recommendation in this report.

**12 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Funding**

12.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Children's Services presenting the changes to the distribution of the Dedicated Schools Grant from April 2021 in line with the Department of Education's National Funding Formula arrangements.

12.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:

- The dedicated schools grant effectively controlled how much money Norfolk County Council could spend on schools.

- Since the agenda was published the Norfolk Schools Forum had met and endorsed the early years funding entitlements formula.
- The Norfolk Schools Forum had supported the initial request to transfer a further 1% from main schools' block to the high needs block. Unfortunately, the government did not support that request, so 0.5% was transferred which was the amount allowed within our jurisdiction.
- A deficit was building up, which would, hopefully, eventually be offset by the government although caution was needed that there was not suddenly a transfer of responsibilities back to the County Council.
- Meetings with MPs had taken place and the Norfolk Schools Forum were also considering lobbying the government to get a resolution to the lack of DSG funding.

12.3 The Chairman highlighted that all County and Unitary authorities were in a similar position, which meant that if the Government did make any major changes to funding, many authorities would be affected. Lobbying of MPs was taking place so it was hoped that they would help to resolve the matter.

12.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree:

- (i) the Dedicated Schools Grant funding including
  - a. the changes to the schools funding formula;
  - b. the changes to the early years funding entitlements formula;
  - c. agreeing the high needs block budget noting that it has been assessed to meet our statutory duties and it adds to the DSG cumulative deficit;
- (ii) to delegate decision making powers to the Executive Director of Children's Services, in conjunction with the Lead Member for Children's Services, delegated authority to agree the final funding cap, or allocation of additional funds, once the final DSG calculations of individual school allocations are known and in line with the principles of Cabinet's decision.

12.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

See Section 4 of the report.

12.6 **Alternative Options**

See Section 5 of the report.

**13 School Place Sufficiency – Schools' Local Growth and Investment Plan**

13.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Children's Services focusing on the Annual Schools Local Growth and Investment Plan.

13.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The Schools Local Growth and Investment Plan provided a snapshot of Norfolk County Council's plans to secure sufficient school places and addressed two issues –



1. Demographic change, due to changes in birth rates and life expectancy, and
2. Population movement resulting from new housing development or migration to and from geographic areas.

Cabinet noted the SLGP was structured in 4 parts:

Part 1 – major growth areas requiring multi-school solutions.

Part 2 – development locations where a new school was planned.

Part 3 – growth areas with implications for existing schools.

Part 4 – areas of the county indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there were several small schools.

- 13.3 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships fully endorsed and supported the plan, particularly the expansion of Ormiston Academy at Costessey as many of the residents in Easton in her division had been unable to transfer from Easton school to Ormiston Academy which was their local secondary school.
- 13.4 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention supported the inclusion of the Thetford Primary School adding that it was good news to see a primary school which would be ready to support local housing growth.
- 13.5 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
- Endorse the Schools' Local Growth and Investment Plan.

13.6 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

See Section 1 of the report.

13.7 **Alternative Options**

The LA has to fulfil its duty to provide sufficient places. The plan outlines some alternative options in areas, where different solutions could be pursued

**14 Schools' Capital Programme Update**

- 14.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Children's Services providing an update on all financial adjustments to the schools' capital programme resulting from recommendations by Capital Priorities Group and decisions by the Executive Director of Children's Services with her delegated powers from Norfolk County Council Cabinet. The report also restated the reporting cycle for the schools' capital programme to Cabinet.
- 14.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:
- The report identified the capital requirements for new schools.
  - This was an update to the report presented to Cabinet in August 2020.
  - The Capital Priorities Group met four times per year to identify and agree new capital priorities.

- The report identified where money would come from, eg from government; Section 106 money and CIL money where councils operated the CIL system and capital allowance of £120m borrowing from 2018 for the SEND programme.
- The SEND programme was currently looking to have places available by summer 2021.
  - The Great Yarmouth SEMH school should be completed by summer 2021, ready for occupation in September 2021.
  - The Fakenham SEND school was progressing well with the completion date expected by the end of 2021.
  - The Cognition and Learning school planned for Easton was sponsored by the government and was expected to be completed by the end of 2021.
- The programme is on track from a special educational needs capital budget.

14.3 The Cabinet Member for Finance endorsed the report and noted the SRB's which would come on stream in summer 2021 which, despite the covid pandemic would help the budget in terms of home to school transport.

14.4 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance endorsed the report, particularly the progress with the school in Fakenham which, if anyone wished, could be viewed via a webcam. (INSERT LINK).

14.5 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- Sign off the report for publishing on the Norfolk County Council website.

#### 14.6 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Comprehensive assessment has been undertaken and is included in the attached report

#### 14.7 **Alternative Options**

Not applicable.

### 15 **Admission Arrangements for the School Year 2022/23.**

15.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director Children's Services providing details of the admissions coordination scheme for all schools and the proposed admissions policy for all Community and Voluntary schools.

15.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report and moved the recommendations, highlighting that the report set out the admission arrangements for the school year 2022-23 and which needed to be approved by Cabinet annually in February each year.

It was noted there were no changes to the admissions arrangements except for the additional recommendation to include a priority within oversubscribed rules for Community & Voluntary Controlled schools for service personnel.

15.3 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention endorsed the proposals, particularly the recommendation to include a priority within oversubscribed rules for Community & Voluntary Controlled Schools for Service Personnel.

15.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- **agree** the continuation of the current co-ordinated admission arrangements and to agree the inclusion of a priority within over-subscription rules for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for Service Personnel.

## 15.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

See section 4 of the report.

## 15.6 **Alternative Options**

None.

## 16 **Adult Learning Annual Plan**

16.1 Cabinet received the report by the Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services asking it to note the Adult Learning Service's exceptional performance over the 2020.

16.2 The Executive Director of Community & Environmental Services highlighted that the Plan was a testament to the work of the Governing Body, staff and the service on how well the service had coped and grown over the last twelve months.

16.3 The Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships introduced the report and moved the recommendations, during which the following points were noted:

- the annual report reflected the achievement of the service which had been one of only 6% of Adult Learning providers who had transitioned 100% of their course online at the beginning of the pandemic. This had helped individuals and businesses get through lockdown and prepare for the future through its online courses.
- Approximately 10,000 learners had enrolled onto online courses.
- Courses gave opportunities for people to learn new skills, help with their wellbeing whilst they had been furloughed or had been made redundant and also helped businesses.
- A wide range of courses was available, including apprenticeships.
- The services had made courses accessible for people who could not previously access them and allowed them to fit in their learning with other commitments.
- After the pandemic the Adult Learning Service would be offering more courses, including some courses to be run from the larger libraries across Norfolk.

16.4 Cabinet endorsed the exceptional work of the team during 2020 and noted the performance of the Adult Learning Service.

- 16.5 The Cabinet Member for Growing the Economy added his endorsement and congratulations to the Adult Learning Team highlighting that this was an excellent achievement which would help to ensure Norfolk was well placed to ensure those who had lost jobs due to covid could be reemployed.
- 16.6 The Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance endorsed the report and praised the team. He also noted the Adult Learning Vision which helped to demonstrate the work being done to enable people to take advantage of learning new skills and the ability to fit them into their lives more easily.

The Vision was “We anticipate and respond to the needs of individuals, communities, employers and Norfolk’s economy through the delivery of outstanding, inspirational and highly flexible learning”.

- 16.7 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Prevention reflected that the IT approach by Norfolk County Council had enabled courses to be accessible in rural areas as access to adult learning previously had been difficult for people living outside Norwich. The achievement of 10,000 learners was incredible and he congratulated everyone involved. He also welcomed the library-based learning to be undertaken in Norfolk.

- 16.8 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. **approve** the Adult Learning Annual Plan
2. **commend** the Adult Learning service’s performance.

#### 16.9 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

- 16.9.1 The Adult Learning Annual Plan is based on the identified needs and priorities for adults in Norfolk, including the emerging needs of the county as a result of the impact of the pandemic. It also responds to the policy and funding requirements of the Education and Skills Funding Agency.
- 16.9.2 The service’s external funding and tuition fee income enable Norfolk County Council to deliver adult learning that enables Norfolk residents to:
- Gain the skills, knowledge and qualifications they need to progress into and within employment
  - Access support, through learning, to live healthy, connected, safe, resilient and independent lives.

#### 16.10 **Alternative Options**

The proposed Adult Learning Annual Plan enabled the Adult Learning service to maintain its external funding contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency and tuition fee income, which bring £5 million into Norfolk for adult learning each year, and an Ofsted rating of good. Cabinet could decide not to deliver Adult Learning in Norfolk and the outcome of this decision would result in the loss of this external funding to Norfolk residents, communities and employers.

### 17 **Acquisition of Property for the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing project.**

- 17.1 Cabinet received the report (including an exempt appendix) by the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services setting out a proposal for the County Council to acquire the leasehold interest and stock of South Denes Car Centre at South Denes Road, NR30 3LW to enable construction of the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing Scheme. The report sought approval for the acquisition of the leasehold interest and stock of South Denes Car Centre, effectively extinguishing the business.
- 17.2 The Chairman referred to the exempt Appendix which contained commercially sensitive information, which Cabinet Members had received a copy of and said that, as no one had indicated they wished to refer to it in the discussion, it would not be discussed during the meeting. He added that the information would become available through the Land Registry once the purchase had been completed.
- 17.3 The Cabinet Member of Commercial Services & Asset Management presented the report and moved the recommendations during which the following points were noted:
- the acquisition would be made as part of the Great Yarmouth 3<sup>rd</sup> River Crossing project and was included in the Capital Budget.
  - Norfolk County Council had been granted a development consent order which included acquisition powers.
  - The GY3RC project required the acquisition of the land, including the stock from the business and the demolition of buildings at the site.
  - The public interest test had been applied and confirmed the exemption of the confidential information; however, the details of the purchase would be included on the land registry website once the purchase had been completed.
- 17.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
- **approve** the acquisition of the leasehold interest and stock of South Denes Car Centre, South Denes Road, Great Yarmouth NR30 3LW on terms agreed and instruct the Director of Property to oversee the implementation of the acquisition.
- 17.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**
- The acquisition of this property by agreement supports the construction of the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing Scheme
- 17.6 **Alternative Options**
- There are no alternative options.
- 18 **Reports of the Cabinet Member and Officer Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting:**
- Cabinet **RESOLVED** to **note** the Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting.

The meeting ended at 12.40pm.

**Chairman**

**Cabinet**  
**1 February 2021**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

<b>Agenda item 6</b>	<b>Public Question Time</b>
6.1	<p><b>Question 1 from Eleanor Laming</b>  A report by Uearthed (Greenpeace UK) shows that more than 3400 of England's high consequence flood assets (there is risk to life and property if they fail) are in very poor condition.</p> <p>I am pleased to see that at the Cabinet meeting on 12 January it was announced that a review of the 2015 Local Flood Risk Management strategy has been undertaken. However, we have already seen the impact of recent flooding in Norfolk, including episodes where people and vehicles had to be rescued.</p> <p>How many high consequence flood assets in Norfolk are in a poor state of repair?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b>  The report by Uearthed (Greenpeace UK) relates to information obtained from the Environment Agency and to answer your specific question we would recommend that you contact them directly.</p> <p>I can add that the Environment Agency have provided this statement:  The Environment Agency (EA) routinely inspects both EA and third-party defences for main rivers and the coast where they act as the Coastal Protection Authority. Where there is an immediate danger of flooding, emergency repairs will be undertaken straight away, or contingency plans put in place if this is not possible. The EA advise third party asset owners where there are concerns about their assets condition, offer them advice and encourage them to make repairs.</p> <p>The EA's annual maintenance programme includes a range of activities that are prioritised and timetabled using information from inspections, maintenance standards, levels of flood risk and from legal and statutory obligations. The maintenance programme is published on GOV.UK</p> <p>The EA maintain approximately 78,000 flood assets across England, 95% of which are in good condition and repairs prioritised where there is significant threat to lives and livelihoods.</p> <p>The EA's 2020 recovery programme inspected over 20,000 assets and, supported by a £120m government investment, all of the EA assets are winter ready either through repairs or, where these have not been completed, robust contingency plans are in place to manage risk until repairs are completed.</p>
6.2	<p><b>Question 2 from Eleanor Laming</b>  Has the Council allocated sufficient funds in its budget to deal with the issue of repairing assets for which it is responsible and dealing with future flooding?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b>  In our role of Highway Authority, we have six highway pumping Stations</p>

Site Ref.	SITE
H08	Caister High Street Pumping Station
M07	Caister-on-Sea Depot Pumping Station and Flow meter
H03	Bacton Pumping Station
H05	Heacham Pumping Station
H09	Tunstead Road, Hoveton Pumping Station
H10	Corpusty Bypass Pumping Station

Additionally, we maintain subway pumps: two in Gt Yarmouth; one in Holt; and one in Kings Lynn. Pumps are also present at two of the Norwich Park & Ride Sites.

These are all maintained under existing contact arrangements and we have sufficient funds for deal with their inspection, maintenance and future replacement.

Our other highway drainage systems consist of gravity-based surface water drainage systems.

These are typically in:

- urban areas – such as gullies and pipes to positive outfalls, soakage disposal, SUDS features, or outfalls into systems maintained by others i.e. Anglian Water.
- Rural areas – such as grips and backdrains. Again, these may be soakage features or outfall onto other systems maintained by others such as land drains.

We have an established proactive gully cleansing regime informed by risk assessment with the cleansing operation being carried out under contract to Tarmac.

In 2020-21 we had a revenue budget of £487,000 for gully cleaning, £413,000 for drainage cleansing and £340,000 for emergency cleaning.

In the same year we had a capital budget of £2.9m for improvements and repairs to drainage systems.

We have funds for repairs and cleansing.

However, they all have a finite capacity and any system can be overwhelmed in periods of intense or prolonged rainfall, particularly when the ground is saturated, and periods of high fluvial or tidal conditions.

6.3

#### **Question 1 from Hayley Pinto**

Doughnut economics is an approach to sustainable planning which helps organisations assess projects to ensure they stay within environmental planetary boundaries (eg climate change and biodiversity loss) and social boundaries (eg equality, housing etc) (<http://bit.ly/DNutEcon>). It is being increasingly adopted as a planning tool by organisations worldwide including Amsterdam and Cornwall council



	<p>(<a href="http://bit.ly/DNutCornwall">http://bit.ly/DNutCornwall</a>) The approach provides a framework which improves transparency and promotes systems thinking. It would ensure all projects are aligned with the councils stated goals of achieving net zero emissions, protecting biodiversity whilst protecting and improving the wellbeing of the population and social equality.</p> <p><b>Would the cabinet consider adopting this approach for Norfolk?</b></p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste:</b>  This suggestion and its implications will be further explored by Cabinet in light of the NCC Environmental Policy and the 7 themes identified in the recent Natural Capital Compendium covering Norfolk. Our approach will also be informed by key Government legislation, expected later in 2021.</p>
6.4	<p><b>Question 2 from Hayley Pinto</b>  Could the council demonstrate how the decisions to decimate established and thriving ecosystems with infrastructure projects like the western link road and Thorpe wood housing development would be consistent with the aspirational principles outlined in this approach and their own environmental policy?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste:</b>  The Norwich Western Link (NWL) is vital to ensure we have adequate infrastructure to avoid existing problems linked to traffic congestion getting worse and to allow for the continued growth of Greater Norwich and Norfolk. We are committed to building the NWL in an environmentally responsible way and want to limit any adverse environmental impacts the new road may have. We will seek opportunities to enhance the environment in the area and are taking full account of our Environmental Policy as part of this. The scheme proposals and more detailed information are being developed and will be shared in our next public consultation, currently planned for the summer of this year. As part of these proposals we plan to include the creation of new habitats and improvements to existing ones in the local area to support a wide range of wildlife.</p> <p>The Thorpe Wood housing development is an issue for the local planning authority, in this case Broadland District Council.</p>
6.5	<p><b>Question from Dr Andrew Boswell</b>  The Constitution (Appendix 22) governs the conduct of, and relationship between, officers and members. It includes an obligation of mutual respect for each other's roles, and a requirement not to seek an unfair advantage or influence. The council employs highway officers, who in May 2019 responded, under the scheme of delegated powers (Constitution Appendix 5) on behalf of the council as a statutory consultee in relation to South Norfolk planning application 2018/2631. In Sept 2020, the Cabinet supplanted this response, and substituted it with a decision issued by Cabinet.</p> <p>How does the Cabinet explain its failure to act within and in accordance with the terms of the Constitution?</p> <p><b>Response by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy &amp; Governance</b>  Appendix 5 of the Council's Constitution sets out at paragraph A.3(b) that the powers delegated to officers are subject to:</p> <p>'...referral to the Executive for consultation or decision on all matters of public controversy or undecided matters of policy or substantial change from previous practice or which involve difficult or major issues where custom and practice or initial</p>

	<p>consultation with elected Members indicates that such referral should take place’.</p> <p>The circumstances, therefore, in which matters delegated to officers may be referred to the Executive are very broadly expressed and include ‘all matters of public controversy’, ‘substantial change from previous practice’ and those which involve ‘difficult or major issues where...initial consultation with elected Members indicates that such referral should take place’</p>
6.6	<p><b>Question 1 from Michael de Whalley</b></p> <p>Figures extracted from environmental permit EPR/WP3234DY/A001 for Rookery South Energy Recovery facility (<a href="http://bit.ly/EP_RookerySouth">bit.ly/EP_RookerySouth</a>) show that it is calculated to generate 65 MW of electricity from 585,000 tonnes of waste and will release c. 176,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per year. From these figures, a 20,000 tonne input of waste is calculated to produce 6459 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/year. Please explain why the council derived figure of 545 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/year (answer 6.31 at last month’s Cabinet) for CO<sub>2</sub> from “the treatment process” is so radically different (c.12 times smaller)?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste.</b></p> <p>The reference made to ‘c. 176,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per year’ appears to relate only to the release of emissions from a waste treatment facility. However, this is not equivalent to the carbon impact of a treatment process, as emissions are only one part of the carbon impact of treatment, which also includes other aspects such as energy generation.</p>
6.7	<p><b>Question 2 from Michael de Whalley</b></p> <p>The carbon intensity is 347 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/kWh for the generated electricity. Government emissions factors (March 2019, <a href="http://bit.ly/Govt_EF">bit.ly/Govt_EF</a>, Table 1) show the carbon intensity of the UK electricity grid to be 281 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/kWh in 2019 and a projected 118 gCO<sub>2</sub>e/kWh in 2030 when NCC plans to be “carbon neutral”. How does generating electricity from 180,000 tonnes of waste which will be three-times as carbon intensive as the grid by 2030 fit with your Environmental Strategy?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste.</b></p> <p>The arrangements to use waste from April 2021 to generate electricity, in a way that increases the recycling of metals and recovery of aggregates, and also removes the need to send waste direct to landfill, whilst also having flexibility to allow for further waste reduction and increases in recycling and reuse, fits very well with the County Council’s Environmental Policy.</p>

**Cabinet**  
**1 February 2021**  
**Local Member Questions**

Agenda item 7	Local Member Issues/Questions
7.1	<p><b>Question from Cllr Alexandra Kemp</b>  Norfolk Councils and the NHS form part of Norfolk's Integrated Care System so take collective responsibility for managing resources, improving Norfolk's health, and ensuring high quality services. In order to prepare for a gradual but safe return to school, and to protect key workers in their vital jobs, the Covid Vaccination Programme need to be extended immediately to teachers, police and prison officers. I have been contacted by worried families of constituents who are Prison Officers and regularly accompany prisoners to hospital in enclosed transport vehicles that increase the risk of Covid transmission.</p> <p>How is Norfolk County Council securing the priority of Norfolk's key workers in the Coronavirus Vaccination Programme?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health &amp; Prevention</b>  Thank you for your question. As you are already aware the NHS is responsible for the vaccination programme. However the Council is providing details of eligible care workers to the NHS. We have built an IT system to do that and contacted all care employers, are working with voluntary organisations, and are feeding names to the NHS as soon as we receive them.</p> <p>I personally would not recommend overruling The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) who have decided the order of vaccination. They will advise the Government if they should consider, beyond frontline health and care workers, whether other occupational groups may need to be given priority for vaccination once the clinically vulnerable and those over fifty have received theirs. The systems that we have built with the NHS can be used to support vaccination of other groups if that is what the advice is changed to.</p>
7.2	<p><b>Question from Cllr Penny Carpenter</b>  Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the project to improve the accessibility to County Hall?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services &amp; Asset Management.</b>  County Hall provides an accessible workplace and we have worked hard to ensure that the office and key meeting rooms areas can be accessed by all of our communities. As was identified in 2020 additional works are required to our North Wing meeting rooms, which include the Council Chamber.</p> <p>Works are progressing well on the site and we would like to thank our contractor MACE for helping to meet a challenging program. Despite the current issues around COVID nationally, they have put in place an excellent programme to ensure the safety of their staff on site – which has been independently reviewed by a</p>

number of external bodies.

It is worth reminding ourselves as to the reason for the works This area has been largely unchanged since it was opened in 1968. There are significant maintenance backlogs and it does not meet the needs of residents, particularly those with disabilities. In particular, the current design does not support Councillors with disabilities – a situation that is unacceptable in 2021.

These are the major problems with the whole suite of meeting rooms and public area comprising the Council Chamber, Cranworth room, Marble Map area, Colman room and Edwards room as well as the toilet facilities

- No compliant access for disabled people (particularly around fire evacuation)
- No working heating or cooling
- Poor lighting levels
- No access to the public gallery in the Council Chamber for wheelchair users

The project is designed to focus on:

- Replacement of plant to provide appropriate levels of heating and cooling and controls so that the environment in each space will suit the occupation levels and activities.
- The existing mechanical ventilation is obsolete and does not work at all. The project will provide full mechanical supply and extract ventilation to all occupied areas. With this level of mechanical ventilation the building can be considered a well ventilated space, which is good in the context of controlling the transmission of Covid 19.
- The Council Chamber has no natural or mechanical ventilation. Under the current HSE guidance on Covid, the Chamber cannot be used for any meetings (including socially distanced meetings). Officers have explored other ways of mechanically handling air into the chamber, but a sufficient quantity cannot be provided.
- The current Covid legislation that allows 'virtual' meetings will expire on the 7th May 2021, but it will be important to provide confidence that we are providing a safe environment for them in undertaking the democratic function as well as for visitors and staff.
- In addition to changes to physical access and facilities, the scheme aims to tackle less obvious barriers arising from poor lighting that are exacerbated by poor colour contrast, busy colour patterns on the carpet that cause distress to certain neuro-diverse sufferers and poor provision for those who rely upon robust modern audio-visual installations.
- The work cannot easily be sub-divided so all works to improve disabled access and the air handling are best done as a single package.

Works are underway and scheduled to handover in May 2021

7.3	<p><b>Question 1 from Cllr Eric Seward</b> How much funding in different grants has the Council received from the Government to do with the Coronavirus pandemic?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b> Thank you for your question. The Council has received £104.588m as set out in Table 4a in the Finance Monitoring Report on the Cabinet Agenda on page 69</p>
7.4	<p><b>Question 2 from Cllr Eric Seward</b> Can you please detail all of this income and expenditure figures for each individual grant to date?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b> Thank you for your question. Forecast pressures by service are shown in Table 4d in the Finance Monitoring Report on the Cabinet Agenda on page 72 with further analysis provided on pages 85-87.</p>
7.5	<p><b>Question from Cllr Dan Roper</b> 61 crashes have resulted in injury or fatalities since the Northern Distributor Road, also known as the Broadland Northway, completely opened in April 2018. What additional safety measures do you think are needed to prevent further injuries and fatalities on this road?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b> Over the past twelve months, we have provided replacement signposts and signs, repairs to damaged kerbs, countdown marker signs on roundabout approaches, revised road markings at Wroxham Road roundabout, additional chevron and 'get in lane' signs, additional planting and SLOW road markings.</p> <p>At the current time, we are seeing a falling trend in personal injury accidents. Whilst this is positive news, it will be partly influenced by the reduced level of traffic relating to Covid-19 restrictions. We are continuing to monitor the safety performance of the road and will take appropriate action if specific interventions are considered necessary.</p>
7.6	<p><b>Question from Cllr Tim Adams</b> The chair of the education select committee has urged ministers to put "the whole engine of the state" behind paving the way for schools to safely reopen. In this spirit what additional measures are Norfolk County Council planning to put in place to support schools in reopening once the government signals that they can do so?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b> Thank you Cllr Adams for this question. Officers across the council are working in a wide range of ways to support settings, schools and colleges. Many of the current challenges, which affect the current situation and the fuller opening of schools require considerable support corporately. For example, testing, health and safety controls, public health guidance, procurement of PPE, transport for children and provision of laptops. In Children's Services we have focused considerable resource on supporting the education system, from across the department. This continues to include support for remote learning, attendance, welfare and safety of pupils, support for mental health, and for vulnerable families.</p> <p>We have a clear approach to recovery which takes account of re-opening of schools</p>

	<p>for all children. We continue to meet multiple times a week with education leaders and provide regular alerts and information to early years, schools and colleges. We take account of challenges and issues raised by education leaders and where needed local solutions to support the re-opening of all schools for all children will be prioritised. For example, we await the national decisions about implementation of mass testing of pupils in schools and we have resource ready to support schools with that if necessary.</p> <p>Throughout this crisis we have commented on the amazing effort and resilience of our staff, teachers and leaders and I'm pleased to say that the education system in Norfolk functions very well with great collaboration and mutual support.</p>
7.7	<p><b>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins</b></p> <p>How much is the current overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant and how much is it anticipated to grow this year especially as schools are having to spend additional money to deal with the effects of the Covid pandemic?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>Thank you Cllr Watkins for this question. The current forecast overspend for 2020-21 on the DSG is £11.260m as per the Finance Monitoring Report on the Cabinet agenda (item 8 – Appendix 1, 2.11). This is a full year, outturn forecast, in line with the Council's approach to all financial monitoring to Cabinet.</p> <p>The cumulative deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant brought forward from previous years totalled £19.703m (item 8 - appendix 1,2.13), and so the anticipated carry forward on the deficit at the end of the year is forecast to be £30.963m.</p> <p>We are not currently anticipating any significant increase in the forecast prior to the end of the financial year as a result of the effects of the Covid pandemic on the High Needs Block. Schools have been able to recoup some COVID related costs from the Government. Where necessary, schools are being offered support to manage their financial position through our schools' finance team, part of our traded education services.</p>
7.8	<p><b>Question 2 from Cllr Brian Watkins</b></p> <p>When does this cause a major concern for the County Council's Finances particularly if the government decides to change the rules?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>Thank you Cllr Watkins for this question. The Government have made no indication that they are considering changing the rules with regards to the terms and conditions of the Dedicated Schools Grant. We continue to work co-operatively with the DfE in relation to our cumulative DSG deficit.</p>
7.9	<p><b>Question from Cllr Terry Jermy</b></p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Waste confirm what work the Council has undertaken with the Environment Agency and local landowners to ensure that ditches, dykes, and drains are well maintained and kept clear over the last four years?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b></p> <p>The Council takes a risk-based approach to formal enforcement action and works with local landowners where issues are identified. The majority of local issues are resolved through negotiation and close working with the relevant landowners and</p>

	<p>other agencies, which negates the requirement for expensive and lengthy formal legal action.</p> <p>The Council also proactively publicises messages where we are undertaking studies and works to ensure landowners and property owners are aware of their roles and responsibilities under the Flood &amp; Water Management Act 2010. Flood Investigation Reports also provide a means to reinforce these roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Close work with the Environment Agency continues and we will look forward to this being enhanced in the coming months as part of the Council initiative to drive closer working with the many agencies who have water management responsibilities in Norfolk.</p>
7.10	<p><b>Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare</b></p> <p>We are finally seeing the Cabinet Member for Children's Services finally taking some responsibility to address digital exclusion and connectivity issues for our children and young people, albeit it six months after the Labour Group proposed action on this very issue. In light of the continuing uncertainty about when schools will reopen, can he confirm how the current actions to address digital access issues and connectivity are being developed into a sustainable plan long term plan to reduce and eradicate the digital divide in Norfolk?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b></p> <p>I'm sure Cllr Smith-Clare would join me in congratulating all the staff involved for the work they have done and for giving me the opportunity to highlight this excellent work. As Cllr Smith-Clare knows, we have been working with the schools system to ensure that the rapid increase in the access to digital devices to support learning has a long-term impact on raising attainment and participation in education for children and their families. Although the pandemic has undoubtedly had a negative impact on learning for many, it has also brought learning into the family home and built much stronger relationships between school and home around children and their learning. We are very determined that this current, urgent work to roll out of devices and connectivity is the first step in building a strong legacy that will have a positive impact on reducing inequalities in opportunity and achievement for disadvantaged children and young people. Planning is underway to establish an ongoing programme of work to roll out refurbished corporate laptops to digitally disadvantaged children and families and that options to address longer term internet connectivity needs will also be developed.</p> <p>In addition to the roll out of equipment and connectivity, Norfolk's Libraries and Children's Services staff are offering support for families who need advice and guidance associated with getting online and coping with online learning.</p>
7.11	<p><b>Question from Cllr Chris Jones</b></p> <p>How much additional income has the Council generated from commercial services over the last four financial years?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>The most significant commercial activities are undertaken by the Norse Group Limited and each year a Norse Group value statement is produced for the Norse Group Shareholder Committee. For 2019-20, this included direct financial payments to the Council of £3.1m.</p> <p>In addition the Council also receives income from charging for services within the</p>



	<p>revenue budget. The income from these charges is used to support the delivery of all the Council's services and assist in balancing the overall budget. There are a wide range of charges, some of which are defined by statute, and in broad terms, where they are not defined in statute, they are based on a market basis in terms of rents, on a cost recovery basis or a contribution towards overheads. Some examples are rental income from County Farms, rental income from solar panels at Scottow, museums charges, and fees for registrars.</p>
7.12	<p><b>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby</b> What is the current average response rate for a decision on an application to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme?</p> <p><b>Response by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy &amp; Governance</b> The Norfolk Assistance scheme forms part of the Councils approach to supporting people in financial hardship through the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Since the 1 December the Council has received 7,144 applications to the scheme of which 1,327 were in the last week alone. The scheme is under considerable pressure and is working hard to train new staff to support the team and increase capacity. All applications received are assessed and prioritised with CEV and people Self Isolating being processed within 24 hours alongside applications from families with children under 5. Applications for emergency Food and Heating then take priority followed by those seeking help with household items including cookers and fridges.</p> <p>Of the 7,144 applications made since 1 December 5,435 have been completed and closed. A further 1,709 remain open however 813 of these have been allocated to support workers and are being progressed with applicants. The remaining 896 applications will be allocated and worked on shortly.</p>
7.13	<p><b>Question from Cllr Danny Douglas</b> When will the Cabinet Member for Highways ensure the correct street signage is on St Margarets Street to replace the current signage which incorrectly advises vehicles that they cannot access St Benedicts Street?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Highways, infrastructure &amp; Transport</b> Thank you for highlighting this issue. I will ask the Highways Team to look into the issue raised.</p>
7.14	<p><b>Question from Cllr Colleen Walker</b> How many first time buyers has the Council helped to get a foot on the property ladder through the new homes that have been built on surplus Council property since 2017?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services &amp; Asset Management</b> I am pleased that Cllr Walker supports more home ownership. This is not a metric that the Council collects and we are not aware of any other authority that collates this information around their own land. Unless a first-time buyer is clearly identifiable (for example through participation in a Government scheme) this information is not something that can be easily collected.</p> <p>Land sold (especially prior to 2017) may have or passed through several owners</p>



	<p>before coming forward for development. Local planning policy will determine the tenure of any new homes that are built in an areas – on any land – and will reflect the local need, as determined by the Local Planning Authority, based upon their assessment of the housing market in each District. They will record these numbers for all land where planning is received and where development starts. It may not always be possible to identify whether a purchaser is a first-time buyer or not.</p> <p>Where the Council is developing homes through its housing company Repton – there are a variety of products that will appeal to first time buyers, including shared ownership products. These will provide high quality homes at an accessible price. At Acle, the first development where Repton is on site, we have exceeded the ‘policy compliant’ amount of affordable housing - supporting another key part of our housing market.</p>
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## Appendix C

### Written Supplementary Questions requiring written responses from the Cabinet Meeting held on Monday 1 February 2021

<b>Agenda item 7 Local Member Questions</b>	
Written supplementary question from Cllr Colleen Walker	<p>I'm amazed at this answer. Does he not accept that he has a responsibility to help first time buyers get a foot on the property ladder by building new homes on surplus council property?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services &amp; Asset Management:</b> As Cllr Walker will be aware both from her time on the Business and Property Committee, as well as questions at both Cabinet and Full Council – NCC is actively developing new homes on surplus County Council land, including within her borough in Great Yarmouth.</p> <p>I would be happy to meet with her to run through the plans in more detail</p>
Written supplementary question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby	<p>What planning is taking place to ensure that there is enough capacity within the NAS team to deal with continuing demand when staff return to their substantive posts within other areas of the Council's services?</p> <p><b>Response by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy &amp; Governance:</b> The Norfolk assistance scheme continues to be monitored closely to ensure that it is able to support those most in need of help as quickly as possible. The high level of applications to the scheme has meant regular readjustments in staffing levels and the team has been well supported by other Council departments through the provision of additional support workers. In order to ensure that there is no staffing cliff edge through workers being called back to their substantive roles at short notice, the scheme is currently recruiting with the aim of bringing in up to 6 additional temporary support workers over the coming month. At this point in time it is believed that these additional staff will ensure the scheme is able to meet the demands placed upon it.</p>
Written supplementary question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare	<p>How many school children and young people in further education still cannot access online learning as at today's date?</p> <p><b>Response by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services:</b> We continue to collect information from schools as to the number of children and families who would benefit from a laptop or connectivity devices. So far we have requests for 3,500 devices, of which over 2,000 have so far been rolled out. Some Academy Trusts have made their own arrangements and the DFE programme is also supplying additional laptops. Further education colleges are being supplied with significant quantities of laptops and we do not collect information from them about individual needs, as it is managed by the post 16 provider. The colleges hold student information which under data protection regulations they have no valid purpose to share with the local authority as the supply of devices is via the Education Schools Funding Agency.</p>