

People and Communities Select Committee

Date: 17 November 2023

Time: 10am

Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Norwich

Advice for members of the public:

This meeting will be held in public and in person.

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Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn off mobile phones

Membership:

Cllr Fran Whymark (Chair)
Cllr Ed Connolly (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Sharon Blundell	Cllr Julian Kirk
Cllr Claire Bowes	Cllr Brian Long
Cllr John Crofts	Cllr Paul Neale
Cllr Michael Dalby	Cllr Mike Smith-Clare
Cllr Brenda Jones	

**For further details and general enquiries about this Agenda
please contact the Committee Officer:**

Hollie Adams on 01603 223029
or email committees@norfolk.gov.uk

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A g e n d a

1 To receive apologies and details of any substitute members attending

2 Minutes

Page **5**

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2023

3 Members to Declare any Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is on your Register of Interests you must not speak or vote on the matter.

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is not on your Register of Interests you must declare that interest at the meeting and not speak or vote on the matter

In either case you may remain in the room where the meeting is taking place. If you consider that it would be inappropriate in the circumstances to remain in the room, you may leave the room while the matter is dealt with.

If you do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you may nevertheless have an **Other Interest** in a matter to be discussed if it affects, to a greater extent than others in your division

- Your wellbeing or financial position, or
- that of your family or close friends
- Any body -
 - Exercising functions of a public nature.
 - Directed to charitable purposes; or
 - One of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union);

Of which you are in a position of general control or management.

If that is the case then you must declare such an interest but can speak and vote on the matter.

4 To receive any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency

5 Public Question Time

Fifteen minutes for questions from members of the public of which due notice has been given. Please note that all questions must be received by the Committee Team (committees@norfolk.gov.uk) by **5pm Monday 13 November 2023**.

For guidance on submitting a public question, please visit <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/councillors-meetings-decisions-and-elections/committees-agendas-and-recent-decisions/ask-a-question-to-a-committee>

6 Local Member Issues/Questions

Fifteen minutes for local member to raise issues of concern of which due notice has been given. Please note that all questions must be received by the Committee Team (committees@norfolk.gov.uk) by **5pm Monday 13 November 2023**.

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Report by the Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services | Page 11 |
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| 9 | Short Breaks Strategy 2023-2026
Report by the Executive Director of Children's Services | Page 101 |
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Report by the Director of Public Health | Page 141 |
| 11 | Financial and Strategic Planning
Report by the Director of Strategic Finance | Page 157 |
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Report by the Executive Director of Adult Social Services | Page 213 |

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Date Agenda Published 9 November 2023



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People and Communities Select Committee **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15 September 2023 at 10am** **In the Council Chamber, County Hall**

Present:

Cllr Fran Whymark (Chair)
Cllr Sharon Blundell Cllr Brenda Jones
Cllr Claire Bowes Cllr Brian Long
Cllr John Crofts Cllr Mike Smith-Clare
Cllr Michael Dalby

Substitute Members Present

Cllr Catherine Rowett for Cllr Paul Neale
Cllr Michael Chenery for Cllr Ed Connolly

Others Present

Hollie Adams	Committee Officer
Michael Bateman	Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships
Christopher Butwright	Assistant Director Public Health Prevention & Policy
Craig Chalmers	Director of Community Social Work
Nick Clinch	Assistant Director Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning
Jonathan Hall	Committee Support Manager
Cllr Alison Thomas	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services
Phil Watson	Director of Family Help and High Needs
James Wilson	Director for Sufficiency Planning and Education Strategy

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Vice Chair Cllr Ed Connolly (Cllr Michael Chenery of Horsburgh substituting), Cllr Paul Neale (Cllr Catherine Rowett substituting) and Cllr Julian Kirk.

1b Election of Vice-Chair

- 1b.1 In the absence of the Vice-Chair, the Select Committee elected a Committee Member to sit as Vice-Chair for the meeting. Cllr Mike Smith-Clare was elected to sit as Vice-Chair for the meeting.

2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minute of the meeting held on 14 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 Cllr Michael Dalby declared a non-pecuniary interest related to Item 7 of the agenda, as he would be attending a placement at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

- 3.2 Cllr Mike Smith-Clare declared a non-pecuniary interest as he ran a training provider which supported SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) provision.

4. Items received as urgent business

- 4.1 There was no urgent business.

5. Public Questions

- 5.1 No public questions were received.

6. Member Questions and Issues

- 6.1 No member questions were received.

7. Integrated winter plan

- 7.1.1 The Select Committee received the report providing information on work being undertaken to support a resilient system able to face the impact of the 2023/24 winter on health and wellbeing, and the specific role of Norfolk County Council in that preparedness. It highlights the developing winter framework with key initiatives that will help our population live as healthy life as possible during winter.

- 7.1.2 The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning introduced the report to the Select Committee:
- The winter plan set out the plans for the upcoming winter, taking on board learning from the previous year, which included an increase in demand in urgent care and the care system, high demand for home care support and pressure around keeping people well. Similar pressures were expected this year.
 - Increased national priorities were detailed in the report and the overarching plan.
 - Local priorities were in place to support residents to stay well and prevent admissions to hospital where possible, which were detailed in the report and overarching plan.
 - To address the expected impact of Covid-19 and flu on the workforce the vaccination programme had been brought forward.
 - The framework would be adapted if changes in policy were brought forward over the winter period.
 - The Winter Plan would also be taken to the Integrated Care Partnership to look at the wider role in the care system and close working with the NHS.

- 7.2 The following points were discussed and noted:
- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services encouraged Committee Members to raise their concerns so that she could share them with the Integrated Care Partnership. She noted the importance of emergency plans helping Councillors, Parish Councils and community organisations could support vulnerable people in winter for example during bad weather. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services hoped that the vaccination programme would be able to be rolled out to carers to reduce the risk of infection to those who they cared for and visited. The Assistant Director of

Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning confirmed that carers were included in the Covid-19 booster vaccination programme.

- More information was requested on how mental health would be prioritised; The Director of Community Social Work replied that some of the actions set out in the report were already taking place such as the fast track discharge from Julian Hospital and fast track for people to receive money for heating. There was a national mental health crisis and due to demand, some of the interventions did not have the impact needed. The Director of Community Social Work **suggested** a briefing note be prepared for Committee Members with information on the new schemes being taken forward.
- The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning confirmed that connections were being made with the resilience team and forums to mitigate energy pressures, ensuring there were plans in place. Officers were planning forward for challenges in capacity by putting in additional capacity in intermediate provision such as reablement.
- Some Committee Members felt that there was not enough detail in the report. The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning clarified that this was an overarching plan, and a other work took place alongside it. The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning **agreed** to provide more information on work taking place alongside the overarching plan in the briefing to be provided by The Director of Community Social Work.
- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services agreed to raise the action plan accompanying the overarching plan when the Winter Plan was discussed at the Integrated Care Partnership.
- A Committee member raised concerns about the risk assessment, stating they felt it should include information about unforeseen future epidemics, unusually severe weather, energy scarcity and prevention of mental health admissions via addressing poverty and inequalities. The Assistant Director of Social Care & Health Partnership Commissioning replied that the department had invested in Occupational Therapists working in districts and working with District, Borough and City councils, and would look at their wider role across the winter period. The Assistant Director of Public Health Prevention & Policy added that the Health Security Agency monitored and planned for unknown health risks, with immediate actions spoken about and locally in place such as the vaccination programme. The UK Health Security Agency also worked locally to help plan in advance of future risks.
- The waits seen in Accident and Emergency departments this year were raised, and the importance of working with NHS partners and districts to address delayed discharges to help impact on this.
- The Director of Community Social Work **agreed** to include practice examples in the briefing paper.
- The closure of Benjamin Court and possible closure of Grays Fair Court was noted and information on the impact of this was requested. Information on this would be **added** to the briefing note.

7.3

The Select Committee

- received the report on the draft Integrated Winter Plan for 2023/24 and offered guidance and comment on the council's winter planning.
- suggested that more detail be taken to the Integrated Care Partnership on the Integrated Winter Plan.

8. SEND & Alternative Provision (SEND & AP) Policy & Inspection Framework, inc. Local First Inclusion Programme

8.1.1 The Select Committee received the report outlining information on the Local First Inclusion programme and sets out the information provided to Scrutiny Committee in May 2023.

8.1.2 The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, and the Director for Sufficiency Planning and Education Strategy introduced the report to the Committee:

- A briefing on this topic was taken to Scrutiny Committee earlier this year.
- The report provided the intention of the work and the scope moving forward.
- The diagram at paragraph 2.1 of the report explained the programme which was an invest to improve approach to strengthen the system at all levels and reduce the dependency of the independent sector.
- There would be 5 workstreams, and these were shown on page 35 of the report.
- This programme would secure £70m of external funding and the Council would also add £20m towards it. The Department for Education would add a further undefined amount of money towards the programme.
- This programme would take 6 years to complete.

8.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Officers clarified that reference in the report to years 4,5 and 6 was the years of the programme. Investment in advisory support to schools would help them build their skills and would not need to be ongoing.
- There was funding for two more special schools. For the new school built in Great Yarmouth for social and emotional difficulties, the average travel time saved was 10miles each way, per journey. Across the three schools built so far the cumulative impact was approximately £200,000 on the school transport budget. When the schools were full this was forecast to be around £1.3m per year, benefiting the budget but also the children who would not have to travel as far to school.
- Officers would review use of funding to ensure investment provided the right amount of special schools as well as supporting mainstream schools.
- Officers were asked what a council measure of good outcomes for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities were. It was confirmed that this would include individual children's goals being met, as well as state funded schools providing value for money and consistent support in mainstream schools.
- The Government's goal to reduce Educational Health and Care plans (EHCPs) by 20% was queried. Officers clarified that EHCPs would allow a child to access a special school but were not required to attend a Special Resource Base or get support funding.
- Identified issues with consistency of support for children based on location was raised. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, reported that improvements had been made in norfolk, with standards being developed on provision expected for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities support. Nearly all mainstream schools were signed up to this.
- The specialist education provision for children aged 16 and over was queried. Officers clarified that stated funded special education was for children aged 3-19 with complex needs. Other special schools ceased education at 16, but

some allowed the children to stay for a year or two longer to support transitions. There were no specialist colleges in Norfolk for post 16 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities education however some had their own in-house provision for example there were specialist classes at City College for young people with autism.

- Concerns were raised that some communication implied that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities could be “cured”. The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, replied that the department knew this was not the case, although recognised that if picked up early, some needs such as speech and language could be addressed.
- The Assistant Director, SEND Strategic Improvement and Partnerships, clarified that when the council was negotiating with the Department for Education about Local First Inclusion it was not allowed to co-produce with families. The area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities strategy was co-produced with families and carers; Local First Inclusion included aspects raised by families and carers through other pieces of work.
- It was clarified that Family Voice were an independent organisation and did not represent the County Council.
- Due to recruitment challenges in speech and language therapy at that time, speech and language therapists helped train staff in early years settings and schools so that these staff could carry out support which did not need therapist intervention

8.3 The Select Committee:

- a. Noted and discussed the programme of work detailed within this report, known as Local First Inclusion, including the overall strategy, providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate
- b. Noted and discussed the key risks and mitigations of this programme given the system-wide and transformative nature of it, providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate
- c. Agreed the proposed programme of annual reports to Scrutiny committee and bi-annual reports to the People and Communities Select Committee

9. Children’s Social Care Review and Norfolk Response – Phase of Change

9.1.1 The Select Committee received the report giving an update on the details of the recently published Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy, outlining reforms for children’s social care

9.1.2 The Select Committee heard a presentation from the Director of Family Help and High Needs; please see appendix A of these minutes.

9.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- A Committee Member asked where in the West of Norfolk this project would be focussed. The Director of Family Help and High Needs clarified that the same boundaries would be followed that children’s social care had been following and aligned with District Council boundaries. There were currently 6 localities, one of which covered the west of the county.
- A Committee member welcomed the approach of working with the whole family. Officers confirmed that this change aimed to reduce silo working; social workers were keen to put this in place, and officers felt this would further improve partnership working. Positive changes had been seen over

the pilot of this approach so far and an evaluation would be carried out at the end of the pilot.

- The Director of Family Help and High Needs **agreed** that a further report could be provided to the committee when more information was known on the funding and to provide feedback on the pilot.
- It was confirmed that translators were available for families who did not speak English as a first language.
- The Chair asked if the location of help hubs would be considered as part of location of teams; The Director of Family Help and High Needs confirmed that this would be the case to help develop local relationships and understanding of local need.

9.3 The Select Committee **AGREED** to:

1. Endorse the principle of increased multi-disciplinary working between key agencies working with children and families in Norfolk.
2. Endorse our response to the proposed reforms.
3. Endorse our aim to become a pathfinder authority, if the opportunity is open to Norfolk, as defined in the Stable Families, Built on Love Strategy
4. Endorse our approach to explore other pathfinder opportunities, for example the regional pathfinder for Fostering Recruitment and Retention
5. receive a further report when more information was known on the funding position and with feedback on the pilot, in approximately March 2024, date to be agreed.

10. Forward Work Programme

10.1 Select Committee discussed the forward work programme.

10.2.1 The short breaks programme would be added to the forward work programme.

10.2.2 The Recreational Drugs report would be moved to January 2024

10.2.3 It was requested that the report on vaping coming to the January 2024 meeting remain on the forward plan for this meeting.

10.3 Select Committee **AGREED** the forward plan with the changes noted above.

The Meeting Closed at 12:12pm

, Chairman,

People and Communities Select Committee

People and Communities Select Committee

Item No: 7

Report Title: Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report

Date of Meeting: 17 November 2023

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships)

Responsible Director: Grahame Bygrave (Interim Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services)

Executive Summary

This paper provides the People and Communities Select Committee with the year-end progress report on Norfolk's independent Armed Forces Covenant Board's Strategy and Action Plan 2022/24. It sets out the Board's forward strategy, it provides an update on national policy developments, and it reports on the recruitment of a new Armed Forces Commissioner for Norfolk.

Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked to:

- 1. To note the local and national developments set out in Section 1, particularly the Government's Armed Forces Act 2021 which brought in legislation for a new duty of due regard, requiring local authorities and other statutory bodies to consider the impact of their policies for health, housing, and education on the armed forces community.**
- 2. To review and comment on the progress made in 2022/2023 to deliver the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2022/24, as summarised in Section 2.**
- 3. To endorse the Armed Forces Covenant Board's forward strategy for 2024/2026, as set out in Section 3.**
- 4. To note the recruitment of a new Armed Forces Commissioner will conclude by March 2024.**

1. Background and Purpose

The National Policy Context

- 1.1 The Ministry of Defence (MOD) launched the National Armed Forces Military Covenant in June 2011 in recognition of the contribution and sacrifice service personnel make for their country. The Government's expectations of local authorities were summarised in its policy paper published in 2015 to ensure that the armed forces community 'has the same access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen'.
- 1.2 Through the Armed Forces Act 2021, the Government strengthened its commitment to the armed forces community. Section 8 of the Act contained a new duty of due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant which must be considered by local authorities and public sector bodies in the provision of health, housing, and education. The Act made provision for the duty to be extended by the Secretary of State to other services in due course. It is widely anticipated Social Care will follow.
- 1.3 The duty of due regard, which came into force on 22 November 2022, is increasing awareness among public bodies of the unique nature of military service, improving the level of service for members of the armed forces community, no matter where in the UK they live. The legislation bolsters previous arrangements to remove disadvantage and improve the consistency of Covenant outcomes for the armed forces community.
- 1.4 The MOD published its tenth Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report in December 2022. The Government continues to grant fund £10M per annum to the armed forces community, targeting those most in need through a range of projects.
- 1.5 The MOD began implementing its Families' Strategy. This includes the roll out of the Future Accommodation Model which allocates housing on military bases according to need, rather than rank. The introduction of a "service child" and "veteran" flag on university and college application forms enables education higher level establishments to offer bespoke support. Six pilot sites continued to offer "wrap-around" childcare for serving families.
- 1.6 The MOD's Strategy for Veterans - Action Plan 2022/24 is progressing at pace across health, housing, and employment. The NHS has consolidated Op COURAGE, its three-strand mental health offer for veterans and extended it to service leavers, reservists, family members and carers. Op RESTORE provides support and treatment for veterans with complex service-related injuries. Op COMMUNITY pilots are underway covering social prescribing and single points of contact for family members. Seventy-one per cent of Primary Care Networks have at least one of GP practice accredited with "Veteran Friendly" status, and 75% of NHS trusts in England are "Veteran Aware".

- 1.7 Op FORTITUDE is a new nation-wide housing referral pathway to support homeless veterans or those at risk of homelessness. The partnership is dealing with higher referral rates than anticipated but is confident it will meet demand, particularly as the Government has invested £8.55M to provide 900 supported housing units for 1,300 veterans. Employment, education, and healthcare advice is provided by partner agencies and charities.
- 1.8 Employment for service leavers is one of the Government's priorities. While 87% of service leavers find work within 6 months, some struggle. The Department for Work and Pensions now has a network of 50 armed forces champions with specialist knowledge to support veterans looking for work.
- 1.9 For veterans in the Justice System, Op NOVA delivers pre- and post-custody emotional and practical support, including housing and employment advice.

Norfolk's context

- 1.10 Set up in 2012, Norfolk's Armed Forces Covenant (NAFC) is a well-established part of the national Covenant programme. It is overseen by the independent Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board. Details of membership and an overview of the armed forces community in Norfolk can be found here: [Members of Board](#).
- 1.11 The Board's ambitious forward strategy and Action Plan 2022/24 is focussed on four objectives:
- **Building communities:** Promote understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant among the serving community, local authorities, and the civilian community, and develop the local offer.
 - **Health, welfare, and housing:** Improve understanding and promote the health and welfare support available to the armed forces community.
 - **Employment and skills:** Work with businesses in Norfolk to develop employment opportunities for the armed forces community and promote the Armed Forces Covenant Pledge.
 - **Education:** Ensure children and young people from service families in Norfolk are supported to achieve a good education and build resilience and aspiration to achieve what they want to in life.
- 1.12 As lead partner of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Council will manage the appointment of a new Armed Forces Commissioner, to take office from 1 April 2024. Air Commodore Kevin Pellatt has served a five-year term, leading the Board through the pandemic, and ensuring the revised work programme was delivered on time and remained aspirational for the armed forces community during complex times.

2 Progress against objectives

- 2.1 The Covenant Board agreed its stronger and more ambitious strategy and Action Plan for 2022/2024 in September 2022. Board reviewed the Action Plan and amended it in September 2023.
- 2.2 The following paragraphs summarise progress on the four main workstreams during 2022/2023.

Building Communities

- 2.3 In response to the Government's expectation that local government will have an evidence base to support the duty of due regard, the Covenant Board commissioned Norfolk Insight to produce a Needs Assessment for the armed forces community across Norfolk. Published in December 2022, the Needs Assessment provides local authorities and public sector bodies in Norfolk with information about their armed forces community to help inform their policies and decision making for service delivery. The inclusion of the Census 2021 data has greatly helped bring the data to life.
- 2.4 Parallel to the Needs Assessment, the Board added a new project to the Action Plan in September 2022. The Board held a workshop in July 2023 to identify the key issues facing veterans and their families, and the issues reported by the military charities in Norfolk who support them. The workshop was attended by sixty-five people from across the veteran community, the charity sector, and the serving community. The event consisted of interviewer-led panel discussions, Q&A sessions, and table discussions. The morning focused on what it was like to be a veteran, and in the afternoon, attendees heard from those employed by charities to support veterans. A wide range of issues were discussed. The Board intends to take forward projects relating to:
- Increasing awareness of the support available to veterans and their families.
 - Identifying veterans in care homes and connecting them to local charities.
 - Improving understanding and increasing collaborative working between the military and civilian charities across Norfolk.
 - Helping military charities understand how local housing authorities enable access to accommodation.
- 2.5 At the request of the Covenant Board, Norfolk was added to the national Forces Connect app. The free app can signpost veterans, armed forces personnel and their loved ones to support and advice in their local area in as little as four clicks. It is designed to link users to organisations offering immediate help and support across a wide range of services. The information is updated monthly, there are no charges or adverts and there's no need to enter any personal data.
- 2.6 The Armed Forces Commissioner for Norfolk continued to meet with elected member armed forces champions from the county and seven district councils to update them on the work of the Covenant Board and to encourage the sharing of best practice.

Health, welfare, and housing

- 2.7 This section of the Action Plan seeks to “Promote greater understanding of the support available to the armed forces community in relation to health and social care services in Norfolk”.
- 2.8 Last year, the Board established a Wellbeing grant programme of up to £60,000 over two years to fund projects to improve mental health and reduce social isolation in the armed forces community. This is being delivered in conjunction with the Norfolk Community Foundation. The awards were made to a range of organisations offering different types of support such as:
- funding resources to run activities for military veterans at a new venue in King’s Lynn, overseen by The Bridge for Heroes.
 - the continuation of the successful “Past and Present” Op NOVA initiative in Norfolk.
 - a research project exploring how Service families at RAF Marham use social media and internet-based technology to communicate with loved ones and its impact on their wellbeing, led by Anglia Ruskin University.
 - making “Head Start” mental health therapy sessions run by Walking with the Wounded available to veterans based in Norfolk.
- 2.9 The Bridge for Heroes used the funding to appoint a full-time coordinator to run activities such as photography, woodwork, art, cooking, and bike maintenance. Over 100 people benefitted from these sessions, giving them confidence to leave their homes post-pandemic and to make new friends. Op NOVA appointed a project manager to oversee a cohort of veterans restoring military gravestones in Great Yarmouth and Gorleston. Those taking part commented on the camaraderie and sense of belonging. Walking with the Wounded provided 115 intensive 1-2-1 mental health therapy sessions for veterans over a 12-week period. Nine completed the full course and they reported being treated with great respect, compassion and understanding. The draft research report written by Anglia Ruskin University provided insight into the wide-ranging experiences of partners and children communicating with deployed service person. It made recommendations to the MOD, RAF Marham, and local schools, all of which could improve the understanding of deployment and the most effective ways for families to keep in touch during time apart.
- 2.10 The Bridge for Heroes and Op NOVA received funding for a second year.
- 2.11 The Armed Forces Commissioner and one of the members of the Board from the NHS restarted their visits to GP surgeries to speak to practice managers and doctors about NHS’s Veteran Friendly GP Scheme. GP surgeries continue to be receptive to the initiative and this is reflected in two figures. Seventy percent of the GP surgeries in Norfolk are accredited as Veteran Friendly and 100% of the Primary Care Networks in Norfolk have at least one GP surgery accredited. Both figures exceed the NHS’s national targets and put Norfolk at the top of the regional chart.

- 2.10 The Board has established excellent links with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) with the appointment of the Medical Director for Norfolk and Waveney ICB to the Board. It has also developed a close working relationship with the ICB communications team.

Employment and skills

- 2.11 The objective of this section of the Action Plan was to “Promote greater understanding amongst businesses operating in Norfolk of the benefits of employing a member of the armed forces community”. After four years engaging with the East of England Energy Group (EEEGR), the Career Transition Partnership and the MOD’s Norfolk Employer Engagement Group, the Board decided to pause its work with the renewable energy sector. The significant turnover of key personnel in the industry and uncertainty around national strategy relating to the sector made it difficult to gain traction. In addition, the MOD’s ‘pause’ on transition out of the military during the pandemic was followed by significant efforts to retain personnel.
- 2.12 The Board was pleased to be approached by Norfolk and Suffolk Care Support for funding to commission the making of three videos encouraging service leavers, veterans, and family members to consider employment in health and care. The videos are used frequently as part of recruitment events. They can be viewed here: [Health and Social Care Videos](#).

Education

- 2.13 This workstream will “Explore how children and young people from service families are supported in Norfolk”.
- 2.14 The Board published the online [Service Pupil Premium information booklet](#) for schools and parents; explaining the disruption of service life, the impact on children and where to access support. It is now working with Children’s Services to consider the most appropriate ways to implement the new duty of due regard for armed forces families.
- 2.15 The Board is working with Scotty’s Little Soldiers, the charity supporting bereaved military children, to raise awareness in education settings of the support available to young people who have lost a close family member.

3 Proposals for 2024/26

- 3.1 In March 2024, the Board will agree a new action plan for 2024/26. The projects will focus on the outcomes of the Veterans’ Workshop:
- Increasing awareness of the support available to veterans and their families.
 - Identifying veterans in care homes and connect them to local charities.
 - Improving understanding and increasing collaborative working between the military and civilian charities across Norfolk.

- Helping military charities understand how local housing authorities determine access to accommodation.

4 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1 The evidence for the proposals is set out in sections 1, 2 and 3. The work of the Board helps ensure a focus on supporting the needs of both serving armed forces communities and their families, as well as the 40,000 veterans and their families who live and work in Norfolk.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 In 2023/24, the County Council provided £10,240 funding to the Board along with 1 FTE officer resource to directly support the work of the Board.

- 5.2 The table below illustrates the budget position as of end of August 2023.

Financial year	Balance brought forward from 2022/23	Income in 2023/24	Current Balance 2023/24
2023/24	£42,619.81	£10,240	£23,105.61

- 5.3 Total in-year spend at the end of August 2023 was £29,754.20. This sum is made up of funds to support RAF Marham Friends and Families Day (£3,500), funds to provide summer activities for families at Robertson Barracks (£2,500), funding to deliver the Veterans' Workshop in July including venue hire and catering (£1,754.20) and the final payment for the Wellbeing Fund (£22,000).
- 5.4 The Board anticipates using funds carried forward into 2024/25 to drive forward its new Action Plan supporting delivery of workshops and events outlined in Section 3.

6 Resources Implications

- 6.1 The objectives detailed in this report can be met within existing budgets and resources.

7 Other Implications

- 7.1 **Legal Implications:** the proposals in this report will enable the Council to fulfil its voluntary commitments under the Armed Forces Act 2011 and to meet the duty of due regard under the Armed Forces Act 2021.

- 7.2 **Human Rights Implications:** none identified.

7.3 **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA):** Norfolk's armed forces community broadly reflects a diversity of people who identify with numerous protected characteristics. The Board therefore gives due regard to the public sector equality duty to ensure that its strategy and actions are focussed on identifying and mitigating:

- Evidenced disadvantage / need and identified solutions where possible.
- Fair access to local services.
- Removing barriers to inclusion.

7.4 Following the introduction of the new duty, the Armed Forces Covenant is included as a specific requirement within the Council's EqIA criteria to understand where the community may be disadvantaged to support decision makers.

7.5 **Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):** none identified.

7.6 **Health and Safety implications:** none identified.

7.7 **Sustainability implications:** none identified.

8 Risk Implications / Assessment

8.1 The Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant sets out the County Council's commitment to supporting armed forces communities and the work of the Board demonstrates this commitment in action. The Board's Action Plan has been developed with significant input from groups and agencies representing armed forces communities and therefore providing some confidence that the actions address areas of greatest need or impact.

9 Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked to:

1. To note the local and national developments set out in Section 1, particularly the Government's Armed Forces Act 2021 which brought in legislation for a new duty of due regard, requiring local authorities and other statutory bodies to consider the impact of their policies for health, housing, and education on the armed forces community.
2. To review and comment on the progress made in 2022/2023 to deliver the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2022/24, as summarised in Section 2.
3. To endorse the Armed Forces Covenant Board's forward strategy for 2024/2026, as set out in Section 3.

4. To note the recruitment of a new Armed Forces Commissioner will conclude by March 2024.

10 Background Papers

10.1 Relevant background papers are linked within the report.

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People and Communities Select Committee

Item No: 8

Report Title: 2024 School Sufficiency Plan

Date of Meeting: 17th November 2023

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Penny Carpenter (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

Responsible Director: Sara Tough, Executive Director Children's

Executive Summary

Norfolk County Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and provides an annual snapshot of how these will be secured in response to the development of District Local Plans. The detailed planning is included in Annex A – the School Sufficiency Plan.

Recommendations / Action Required [delete as appropriate]

The Select Committee is asked to:

1. Recommend that the Cabinet adopt the School Sufficiency Plan 2024.

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 Norfolk County Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places and provides an annual snapshot of how these will be secured – the School Sufficiency Plan supports this long-term view of education trends.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The School sufficiency plan outlines how Norfolk County Council will deliver its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. This annual snapshot of how the school places will be secured is created in response to a) demographic change, prompted by changes such as birth rates and life expectancy and b) population movement, resulting from new housing development or migration to and from particular geographic areas. Pupil forecast information is taken annually in May ensuring a consistent timescale, that sits within the admission process.

- 2.2 The evidence used for the identification of planned growth and decline comes from a range of sources, including population data provided by health authorities and planned housing growth by District Councils. The housing data can be based on both their five-year land trajectory and local plan information provided annually. We liaise with the districts at least twice a year to gain further updated information as required. Where decisions are necessary for school capital development, we will also engage with the developers when appropriate to monitor local context.
- 2.3 School forecasting data has been used to inform the pupil movement across the schools' estate. The data identifies patterns in relation to catchment change and parental preference patterns. We plan using catchment numbers, assessing the capacity of schools against the overall catchment cohorts giving defined measurable areas. We take into account the impact of parental preference, but this can be variable from year to year, and our intention is to always provide sustainable education settings in sustainable locations.
- 2.4 Some housing developments agreed as part of Local Plans will take many years to be delivered. Where a need for new places is identified, this is considered as part of the planning process at an early stage.
- 2.5 Housing Growth projected by District Councils is subject to change, so the School Sufficiency Plan provides an annual snapshot in time, anticipating the likely investments in new places for the next 10 years.
- 2.6 Details of proposed expansion projects and proposed plans for new schools are included in the plan in Appendix A. The report includes greater emphasis on the changing demographic patterns against the context of the growth areas, and as a result, an increased commentary and discussion of the methodology to plan for any reduction in school places.
- 2.7 The school's capital programme is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet on the 29th of January 2024, as part of the overall Council capital programme which will set out the prioritised projects to provide new places during a three-year period.
- 2.8 The request to change the deadline for approval by Cabinet, allows greater analysis of the data and allows colleagues from Capital, Place Planning and Admissions to collaborate using the data which will strengthen the position for the annual update for school place planning.

3. Impact of the Proposal

3.1 As a result of this proposal Norfolk County Council will:

- Continue to implement the policies for developing Norfolk's Education Landscape agreed in March 2020.
- Review our current policies to address the decline in pupil numbers and how we best support schools which may be unsustainable. Our aim is to ensure schools are situated in the right locations to meet communities need.
- Continue to adopt a pro-active approach to place planning for all areas with demographic change, ensuring efficient use of resources and value for money.
- Identify any changes to the school's capital programme through the regular reporting to Cabinet.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

4.1 The proposed School Sufficiency Plan provides the necessary detail to ensure we secure sufficient school places and prioritise Schools capital appropriately.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 The statutory duty is to provide sufficient places.
- 5.2 It is possible to plan for fewer additional places, where surplus places are available further afield, but within maximum recommended travel distances.
- 5.3 Norfolk County Council would then have a duty to provide Home to School Transport. This would add a considerable inconvenience to children and families and is outside of the Council's policies (e.g., building local communities). It would also add to the existing transport costs, where budget pressures already exist.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are significant financial implications for Norfolk County Council if all housing developments are delivered as expected. Timescales for building, however, are often longer than anticipated.
- 6.2 Careful consideration will always be given to existing other local school capacity, ensuring we make use of the existing estate before commissioning new places, balancing against growth and sustainable transport costs.
- 6.3 Government grant contributions (Basic Need Capital) funds the majority of the programme.
- 6.4 Developer contributions are secured as part of the planning process and set out in S106 agreements, and these continue to ringfence education contributions

for some areas of the County. These also include provision for school sites in larger housing developments.

- 6.5 For areas covered by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), separate arrangements are in place to secure contributions for Education Infrastructure. These have been set out as part of previous reports on the schools' capital programme.
- 6.6 The overall cost of delivering all places identified in this plan is approximately £396m. Funding from developer contributions is expected to provide approximately £103m, leaving a shortfall of £293m. This assumes no additional external funding via Basic Need. Whilst the amount of future Basic Need funding is currently not known, it is highly unlikely that this substantial flow of funding will not continue. Historically, we have always received additional funding and, together with developer contributions, the programme has been 100% funded year-on-year.
- 6.7 Whilst the funding sources mentioned above usually closes the gap, a shortfall from both these funding sources represents a risk for Norfolk County Council, for which, to reduce the risk, the capital programme contains a contingency for £30m of borrowing capacity. This mitigation arose following the move to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions for part of Norfolk, rather than S106, which has resulted in lower contributions being available. To date, this facility has not required to be used, but review is underway to identify if it may be required in future years, depending upon the level of Basic Need grant funding from Government.
- 6.8 Financial planning for providing new school places is set out as part of the capital programme scheduled to be presented to cabinet on the 29th of January 2024, this will set out the prioritised projects for the next three years and will take into account available funding.
- 6.9 The Greater Norwich Growth Board last year approved the use of £2.5M CIL income for the Greater Norwich area to be used to offset the borrowing required to deliver schools infrastructure projects in Greater Norwich.
- 6.10 The Government is proposing to change the Community Infrastructure Levy and introduce the Infrastructure Levy that could fund a wider selection of projects, this may impact the available funds for education. In addition, the current proposal is to fund commitments based on the property sale values which would mean funding would be released after the development has reached near completion. This would increase the potential for NCC having to forward fund projects with no certainty on the available funding that could yield from the development. This proposal remains at government consultation stage, which we have submitted a response highlighting the increased risk on Local Authorities.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 Staff: The place planning duties will continue to be delivered with current staffing levels.

7.2 Property: There are no changes to the requirements for office space.

7.3 IT: There are no changes to the requirements for IT.

8. Other Implications

8.1 Legal Implications: none identified.

8.2 Human Rights Implications: none identified.

8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):

New school places are planned to ensure that provision has no adverse impact on young people including those with disabilities, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnerships, pregnancy/maternity, race, religious belief, sex, or sexual orientation where appropriate. The agreed policy aims to secure a good place of education for every child. It seeks to ensure that every school has sufficient capacity for strong leadership and governance to safeguard a good education for all.

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): none identified.

8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate): none identified.

8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):

8.6.1 Large scale housing developments require associated infrastructure, including school places to create sustainable communities. The School Sufficiency Plan in Annex A sets out how these are likely to be secured in Norfolk. This will ensure that places are available locally and the need for travel and Home to School Transport is minimised.

8.6.2 Section 4 of the School Sufficiency Plan sets out how to address provision of places that becomes unsustainable, usually through demographic decline.

8.6.3 NCC has a target to carbon net zero by 2030 and this has implications for all new building design and schools as a subset. This is addressed within the Schools Capital Programme.

8.7 Any Other Implications: none identified.

9. Risk Implications / Assessment

9.1 The key risk for Norfolk County Council is a failure to provide sufficient school places. The School Sufficiency Plan sets out how this will be mitigated.

10. Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked to:

1. Recommend that the Cabinet adopt the School Sufficiency Plan 2024

11. Background Papers

11.1 Capital Schools' Programme May 2022

11.2 [Schools' Capital Programme November 2021](#), Page 83

11.2 [Education Landscape and School Place Sufficiency](#), January 2020 Page 757

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Norfolk County Council

School Sufficiency Plan

2024

This year's School Sufficiency Plan has been dedicated to our dear friend and colleague Jane Blackwell who very sadly lost her life earlier this year. Jane served 21 years within the Local Authority with dedication and commitment. For her last 10 years, up until she retired, Jane ensured education places were safeguarded and secured for children and young people across Norfolk. We would like to recognise Jane's legacy which will last with the continued work associated with the planned new school places.



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Introduction

The School Sufficiency Plan outlines how the Local Authority is meeting its statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places for Norfolk children aged 4-16. It gives an overview of the key demographic changes that impact on this duty and highlights areas of interest across the county that could be affected by growth or decline. Our vision for 'Every Child in Norfolk to Flourish' continues to unite the county but we know that success can only be fully realised through the way we work together at a local and community level, through system leadership across the landscape and through sustainable partnerships with one another.

Norfolk County Council works collaboratively to achieve a locally coherent and sustainable organisation of schools by working closely with the Regional Director, local partners, and communities. We continue to foster our existing partnerships with our schools, academy trusts, governing boards, diocese, and other stakeholders to ensure we have the appropriate school places to provide the highest quality of education for our children and young people to flourish.

This plan will show local communities how we expect school provision to change over the next few years. It brings together various information sources and highlights some of the challenge the Local Authority must ensure it is meeting its statutory duty.

Planning Policy and Principles

The Schools Infrastructure Policy setting out the council's approach for education for the next few years is currently being refreshed and updated. It will consider the ambition for Norfolk alongside the national policy framework and local context, to ensure changes to existing schools' infrastructure and the creation of new infrastructure will support a self-improving system that provides the best possible outcomes for Children.

To ensure the children and young people of Norfolk Flourish. Education sufficiency must consider many, at times conflicting factors. This includes the need to:

- Respond to local need, to raise standards, to manage inclusion across the education sector.
- Address the shortage in skilled staff to support our Early Years and School system.
- Manage within a confined financial system delivering our duties as efficiently as possible.

Schools and academies that make up the education landscape will need to collaborate with the LA (Local Authority) to meet the challenges in demographic decline and support processes to best operate the school infrastructure to benefit all children in our care.



Within our current policy, any new provision that is built to meet need is usually two forms of entry for all through-primary, providing 420 places with Early Years or specialist resource provision. This is the national, as well as local expectation and overall, it facilitates the best educational structure. Secondary schools should be a minimum of 900 places or larger. All school organisational changes should promote the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) into mainstream schools. Meeting this expectation can be more challenging, where there is not a steady flow of children from new developments, and it is less predictable.

Capacity across the sector will be measured to ensure all buildings are fully utilised and delivering for their local communities, to maximise the occupancy of the existing estate. We must ensure every child receives a fulfilled and expansive education giving children of the future aspiration to flourish and exceed their expectations. Having a secure education setting delivering at the highest standard will support this.

New schools or decisions relating to existing schools are made with an expectation that schools are situated in the heart of their communities in sustainable locations, giving the ability for local children to walk or cycle within the legally determined travel distances for children in school.

School Organisation

Norfolk's education landscape is very diverse and mixed, it reflects the urban and rural mix of settings that exist. There are 400 schools delivering mainstream education, 18 complex needs schools and 3 nursery schools all contributing to the outcomes of our children and young people.

As of September 2023, there are 350 primary phase schools, 187 of which are academies or free schools and 163 are LA Maintained.

Secondary provision is made up of 50 schools in the sector, 49 of the schools are academies or free schools with 1 remaining as an LA Maintained (Foundation) school.

The most common model of curriculum delivery is 11-18 years with a sixth form, although there are 25 Norfolk Secondary schools currently offering 11-16 study only.

Three of Norfolk's schools provide "all-through" primary and secondary education.

One school provides specialist education for the 14-19 age range:

- **University Technical Colleges (UTC)** specialise in subjects that need modern, technical, industry-standard equipment such as engineering and construction, teaching these disciplines alongside business skills and the use of ICT. They are sponsored by a local university and employers, and often work in partnership with FE (Further Education) colleges and established academy trusts. They are usually for 500-800 students.



Any new schools since 2011 are established as a Free School and therefore set up as academies. After opening the free school will be run by a Multi Academy Trust.

Norfolk County Council works closely with schools, governing bodies, and academy trusts to manage the supply and demand of pupil places. The County Council will undertake statutory consultations on the school changes and significant alterations. The consultation process includes residents, parents, governors, local Councillors, and other community representatives all with an interest in the proposals.

Surplus places can also mean the reduction of school provision in an area through reduced admission arrangements or rationalisation of school provision, including changes to existing catchment areas. Any review of school provision whether it be, opening, closing, amalgamating, expanding, or contracting of schools will be led by forecast information or organisation/structure changes. We will try to ensure that there is the right pupil places or pupil demand that exists.

Duties and Legislation

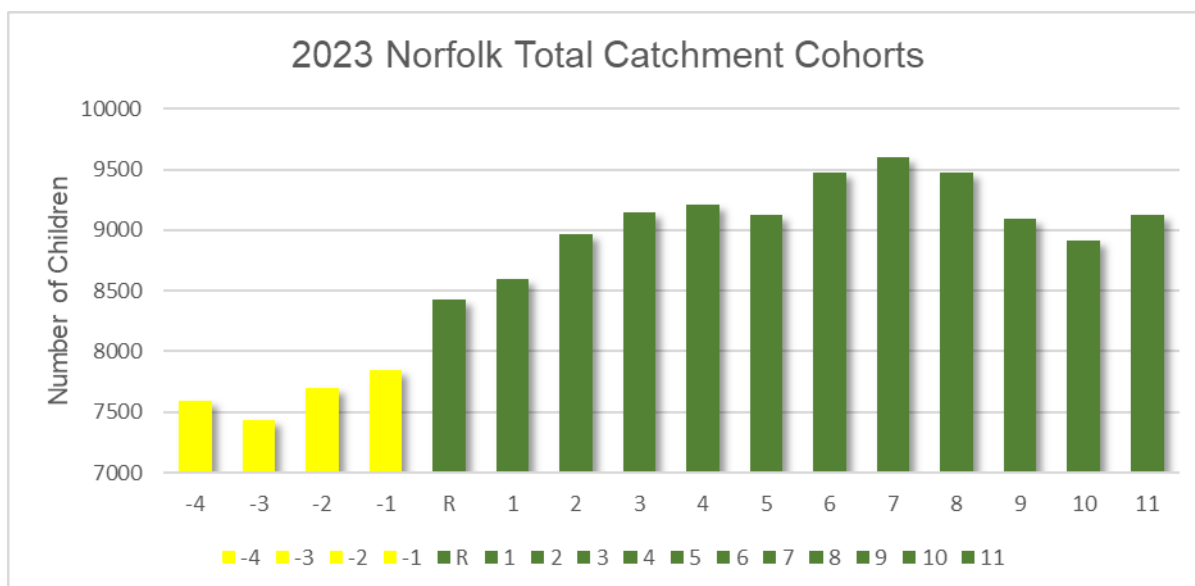
Set out below is a list of key national legislation affecting school organisation and place planning.

- Ensure sufficient schools places to meet demand (Education Act 1996)
- Increase opportunities for parental choice (Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- Ensure fair access to educational opportunity (Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Vol 2
- Equality Act 2010: Advice for schools
- Childrens and Families Act (2014)
- School Admission Code

Pupil Population

Norfolk's pupil population has been in decline for some time, this was first highlighted to schools in 2019 when it was evident the birth rate was starting to fall. The previous peak in pupil population occurred in 2003 and these pupils entered the primary phase around 2007/2008. Since this period numbers have gradually been reducing with some recovery, but now continue to fall and reach an all-time low of approximately 7400 pupils.

(Graph 1 Norfolk Total Pupil Population, indicating total catchment numbers by cohort – data taken from NHS (National Health Service) Health data for Norfolk)



The data shows the existing higher cohorts of the primary phase sector transitioning through into the secondary phases, following September 2023 admission round we will have one final year of higher numbers expected. This will impact different areas and schools differently and will present a challenge as the affect is not sustained for a long period in the secondary phase. School's Infrastructure colleagues have been working with Post 16 education colleagues to assess how these increased numbers may be accommodated across the existing Post 16 provision.

Based on the current trajectory of birth numbers the primary phase will continue to see reduced numbers entering the reception cohort and as a result, overtime, the older cohorts reducing, this will have quite different and significant effects on settings in different communities. It does impact all schools but presents different challenges dependent upon the size of the school. Children's Services Place Planning expects the smallest of cohorts to begin entering the primary phase from September 2024 and the same time the last of the higher cohorts leaves the phase we will work alongside key stakeholders to manage the implications of this and support schools to safeguard places where absolutely necessary. The reduced numbers in the preschool and early years sectors will also have a considerable impact on early years settings presenting its own challenges for a different stakeholder group.

Norfolk schools have not seen such significant small numbers as are currently being presented and it will require collaboration across all stakeholders to navigate this challenge. We cannot underestimate the impact this will have on our settings across the region, this is a national trend which will challenge our school infrastructure.

The local planning authorities continue to plan for housing delivery across the county, the impact of the housing market slowdown is not helping the schools currently, and those areas with limited housing are likely to reduce at a faster rate



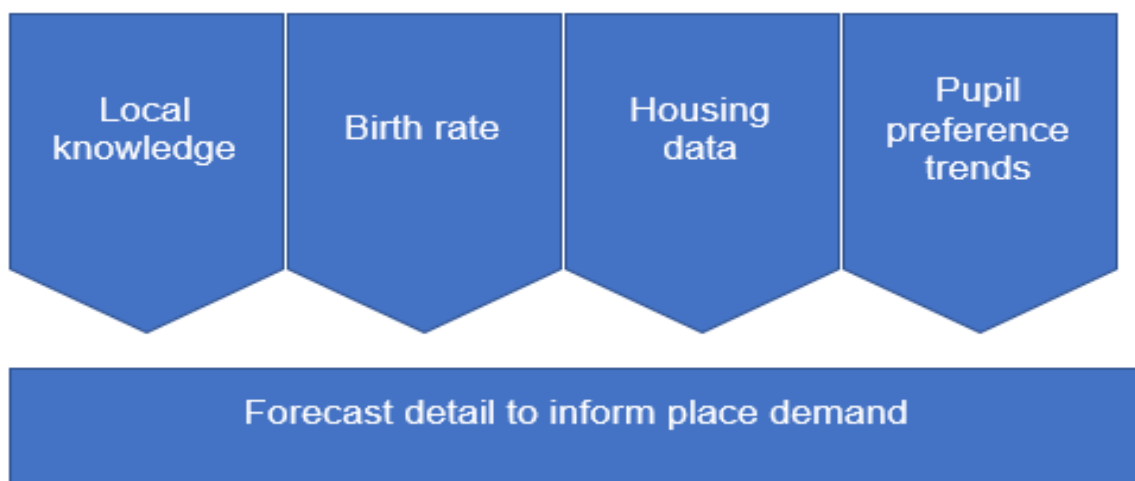
than those in expanding urban settings. We must balance the impact using existing capacity and resource in differing ways to support demand and have a clear vision for managing that capacity for areas where the need will once again return.

Approach to Pupil Place Planning

Pupil place planning and provision of additional schools' places is an increasingly complex task with the changes in the school population in both primary and secondary phases. Norfolk County Council must ensure we create high quality school educational provision within Norfolk whilst considering many varied factors, such as new housing development, demographic change, individual school status within a system where schools increasingly have greater autonomy. The size and diversity of Norfolk also creates challenges for meeting the demand for place planning against the main principle for providing appropriate local places for local children.

Each year we undertake a robust and comprehensive approach to pupil place planning that builds and revises the forecasting information, outlining the place demand for children requiring a mainstream stream school placement across the age group of 4-16.

(Diagram 1 details the steps taken to build the forecast for pupil places)



Forecasting for mainstream schools are split across the county by planning areas which is a mechanism required when reporting school capacity back to the DFE (Department for Education) via the School Capacity Return. The planning areas are geographical areas across the county which have several schools both in primary and secondary phase that often interact with each other, they may not always be in traditional feeder school groups, they are arranged often by proximity to one another.

The following factors inform the forecasting for school places:

- Numbers of children living in an area, taken from school census detail.



- Numbers of children attending local schools, taken from school census.
- Birth data provided monthly; detail provided through GP (General Practitioners) registration data (NHS).
- Preference patterns assessed over a three-year weighted average.
- Detail on migration and admissions data is modelled to inform transition years across Year Reception, Three and Seven.
- Housing detail is received from the district, borough, and city councils. Local plan and housing projections from the five-year land supplies are factored in against the pupil data using local multiplier information.

The School Capacity Return once assessed by the DFE also informs a Local Authority scorecard which determines the accuracy of forecasting. Norfolk has achieved very highly against this measure in recent rounds and continues to monitor its performance against the national picture. ([DFE LA Scorecard Information](#))

Planning Process

Norfolk's Local Planning Authorities (including Norfolk County Council) have a long track record of working together to achieve shared objectives. In doing so they have all agreed to cooperate on a range of strategic cross-boundary planning issues through the implementation of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework ([Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework \(NSPF\) Web Link](#)) It sets out how all planning authorities will work together to reach the same agreed outcomes.

Norfolk County Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications which consists of more than 20 dwellings. We apply fair principles in reviewing the need for school places which is set out in the Planning Obligation Standards ([Planning Obligation Standard Web Link](#)).

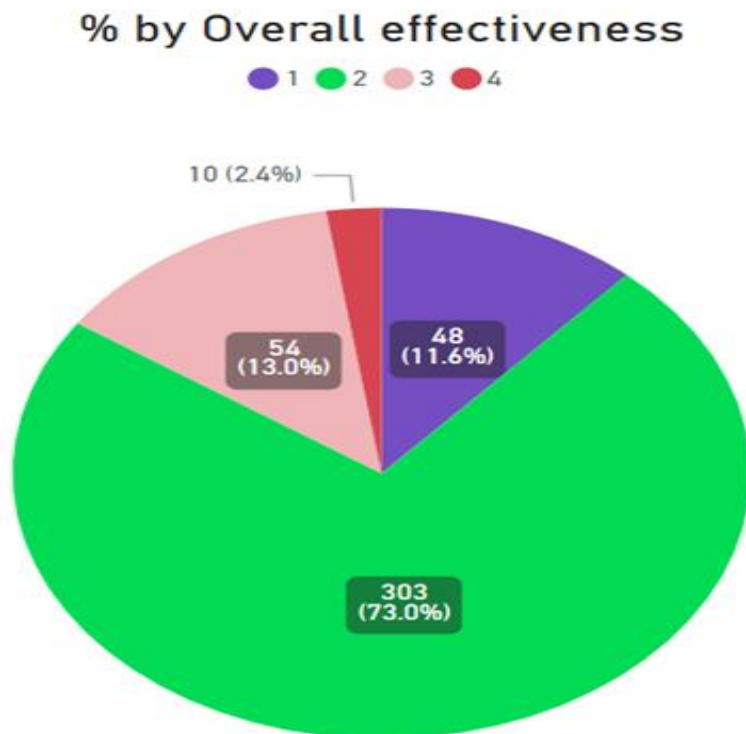
(Diagram 2 – Outlining the involvement of Children's Service in the planning process)



National Policy Guidance/ Legislation	District Council Local Plans	Neighbourhood Plans	Planning Applications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responding as a consultee on national planning policy guidance and any legislative amendments. Providing a response, as required, on behalf of Childrens Services to shape guidance and legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responding to consultations on housing allocations and accompanying infrastructure policies ensuring that the County Council Planning Obligations Standards are referred to in the Local Plan.Ensuring that education requirements are included in any strategic housing site masterplans / Supplementary Planning Document and allocation policy.Ensuring existing school sites are adequately protected and allow for future expansion where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responding to consultations on Neighbourhood Plans. In particular on the designation of school playing fields as local green spaces and housing allocations to ensure that school land is retained for future school use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responding to planning applications, including pre-applications, over 20 dwellings. To secure monetary mitigation, through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy, to ensure there are sufficient school places for growing populations.Ensuring on major strategic sites that new on-site school(s) are delivered through developer funding mechanisms.

School Performance

(Ofsted judgements indicated as a percentage of overall effectiveness from September 2023)



A good Ofsted judgement gives us confidence that a provider is safe, children learn well and achieve good outcomes, which means they are more likely to succeed at the next stage of their education.



As of 1st September 2023, 85% of Norfolk schools were rated Good or better, by Ofsted, compared to 89% nationally.

The percentage of secondary and special schools judged good or outstanding remain above national figures (Norfolk secondary 85% v England 82%, Norfolk special 92% v National 90%). The proportion of primary schools judged to be good remains below the national average (Norfolk 84%, England 90%).

Plan Structure

The School Sufficiency Plan (SSP) provides a snapshot of Norfolk County Council's education landscape and how it plans to fulfil its statutory responsibility to ensure there are sufficient school places for Norfolk children aged 4-16. Fundamentally, it addresses two issues.

- 1) Demographic change, prompted by changes such as birth rates and life expectancy and
- 2) Population change, resulting from new housing development or migration across geographical areas.

The plan is structured across the seven district, boroughs or city councils and identifies any growth or decline associated with the following four key areas:

Part 1 Major growth areas which will require multi school solutions.

Part 2 Development locations where one new school is planned.

Part 3 Growth area with implications for existing schools

Part 4 Areas indicating decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Breckland District

District Context

(Table 1 indicates total number and type of schools across the county)

Phase of School	All Through	Alt provision	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Breckland	1	1	0	57	7	2	68
Academies		47		LA Maintained		21	



Pupil Population

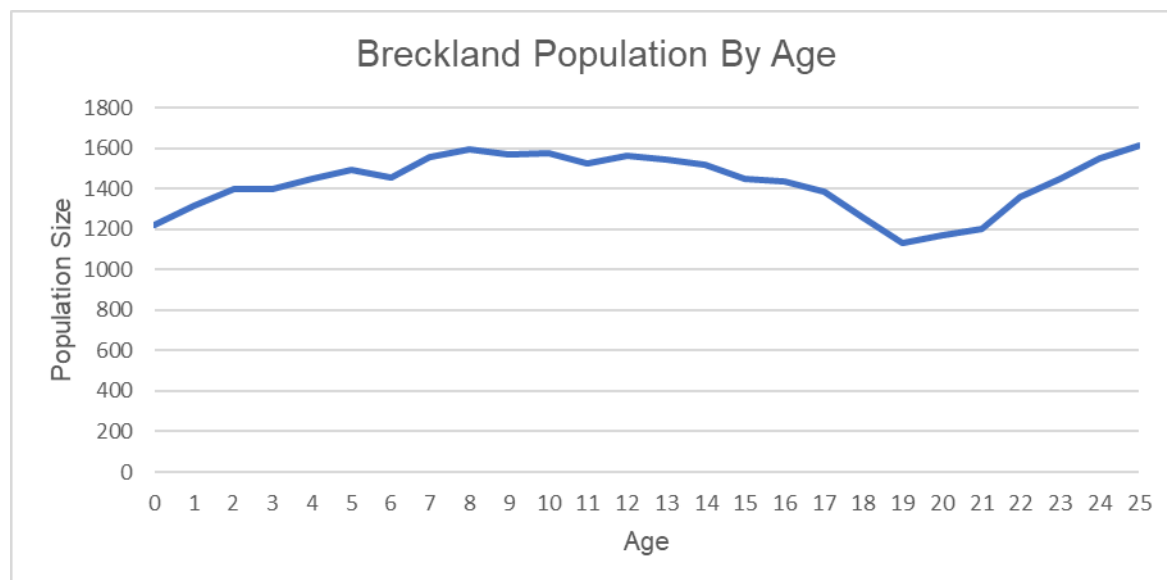
(Table 2 – Mainstream pupil population figures for Breckland for period 2016 to 2023)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary Places	9,637	9,659	9,634	9,557	9,610	9,603	9,425	9,403
Secondary Places	5,856	5,855	5,833	6,018	6,033	6,123	6,207	6,198
Total	15,493	15,514	15,467	15,575	15,643	15,726	15,632	15,601

(Figures taken from September census data each year. Data for 2023 has been taken from the May census count)

The data continues to show a slowing of the population across Breckland in school age children, the higher year groups in primary moving into secondary which is expected to be followed by a sharp decline.

(Graph 2 Population size by Age taken from ONS (Office for National Statistics) census 2021 detail)



Figures suggest a sharp reduction from the peak, in recent years of just under 1,600 children down to 1,200 children based on the graphs detail from the ONS census data of 2021. The lowest age being 19 where it reached a significant low of 1,133, shortly after a sudden increase can be seen.

Breckland are in the process of reviewing their Local Plan for the period 2011-2036, the new plan will run from 2021 to 2046. Over the life of this plan the number of young people aged 0-15 is estimated to increase by only 2.2%, which is a small



fraction of the overall population aged 16 and over. Over the last five-year period 6,018 houses have been built across the district.

At the time of writing there were no further updates from the Office of the National Statistics to give any mid-year review of data which was provided last year.

The total capacity across all schools in the area in the primary phase totalled 11,403 places the number on role across the same group of schools was 9,413 places identifying 1,990 surplus places. We expect the net change of places to increase by a further 75 places in this area with the movement between the existing Year 6 and the incoming Reception cohort. Increasing surplus places across the sector to 2,065 places across the primary age schools.

Part 1 - Major growth areas which will require multi-school solutions.

Attleborough

Sustainable Urban Extension of 4000 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

There are two primary schools centrally located collectively able to provide 150 places across each year group. Preference patterns suggest movement into the Wymondham schools and surrounding villages impacting the central schools and some outliers of Attleborough.

Latest assessment of growth

An outline planning permission was approved in March 2020 for 4,000 new homes, a link road, two new primary phase schools, community facilities and neighbourhood centres.

Homes England continue to lead the delivery on this large-scale development, time taken in delivering the road infrastructure needed to unlock the project has slowed progress overall. On the 3rd of March 2023 the first reserved matters application for the first road infrastructure phase with associated housing was submitted for determination. It is expected later this year the project will recommence, coming forward in seven phases.

Childrens Services is currently engaged in discussion regarding the phasing and location of the first primary school site associated with this development.



Current pressures on pupil numbers

There remains capacity across the existing primary phase, and this appears stable for the next two to three years, but beyond this, capacity of existing schools is absorbed. Parental preference will continue to draw pupils out of the town to smaller surrounding schools. This spread of parental preference using both town schools and more rural schools is a pattern expected to continue when additional development comes forward.

The secondary school numbers are steadily increasing against the capacity of the building. Numbers for academic year 23/24 were in excess of the schools PAN, the school has been able to offset this higher intake by smaller cohorts higher up the school age range, but it is anticipated this demand will progressively increase through the next few years.

Sufficiency response

The impact on the local schools will largely depend on the pace of development, by both the significant Strategic Urban Extension as well as other surrounding developments which are contributing to growth.

Primary numbers are expected to maintain manageable levels over the next few years, Childrens Services Place Planning will monitor as part of the annual review and assess any changes in parental preferences. This detail will inform decisions in relation to the delivery of additional land for the delivery of safeguarded sites for new primary phase schools.

Secondary provision is expected to see increased numbers flow through from the primary phase. The pattern of movement to Wymondham is likely to continue whilst that is possible, but as this reaches capacity, more pupils are expected to remain in Attleborough and surrounding secondary provision. The growth will impact both 11-16 and post-16 learners as capacity across the site will be put increasingly under pressure. Childrens Service Capital Programme has a planned approach for expansion to meet demand which will safeguard provision and meet local need for the future. The options for expansion and the size of this expansion are being consider currently against the available funds for delivery.



Table 3. Capital response.

Attleborough	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Current Programme	Attleborough Academy (High)	7FE/9FE expansion	Stage 1 complete. Concept design underway	IRO £10.0m	2025+
Future programme	New primary 1	2-3FE	-	IRO £11.0m	2026+
Future programme	New primary 2	2-3FE	-	IRO £11.0m	2028+

Thetford

Kingsfleet – 5000 new dwellings

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

Primary School places within Thetford are provided by 8 schools, 6 academies and 2 community schools, a mix of infant, junior and all-through primary. A total of 360 places are available in each year group across the primary phase. Numbers of places in catchment suggest a decline against overall capacity, and broadly most of the preference is directed to the town schools, a small number of pupils are moving outside of the town.

Latest assessment of growth

The land promoters for this strategic development, Pigeon Investment Management Limited (Pigeon Homes), have been working with NCC (Norfolk County Council) Children's Services to ensure new schools are provided as part of the project masterplan. Progress in build out continues to be slow with three housebuilders onsite aiming to speed up delivery against previous years outturns. NCC is currently in discussion on the transfer of the first school site based on agreed triggers within the S106, this could happen during 2024/2025 academic year, delayed due to the current slower than anticipated build out of homes.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

There is some spare capacity at some schools in the town. With the relatively slow build out of new homes, and a decline in the birth rate. The existing primary school provision in the town appears adequate for the short/medium term. Secondary capacity remains capable of accommodating the current demand and has taken



steps to increase PAN based on a change in preference as the larger cohorts reach secondary phase.

Sufficiency response

The slower than expected development has impacted the delivery of pupils along with the widespread demographic downturn. Transfer of the first primary school site will occur during the next academic year and Children's Services Place Planning will continue to monitor existing school capacity against population changes.

The parental preference change for Thetford Academy and additional pupils in the secondary phase cohort will continue to increase, confirmation of the overall capacity of the school site is due to be completed by the DFE. This will give a clear position of the overall capacity the LA can utilise as numbers increase and discussion with the Trust will begin if pressure is recognised leading into the admission rounds. The school has already taken steps to admit above its PAN this year and increased its PAN to 290 for the 2024/25 admission round.

Table 4. Capital response.

Thetford	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New Primary School 1	2FE (Full time equivalent)	Design stage	IRO £11.0m (increased as working towards carbon net zero)	2026+
Future programme	New Primary School 2	2FE	-	£11.0m	-
Future programme	New Primary School 3	2FE	-	£11.0m	-
Future programme	Secondary extension	Tbc	-	tbc	-

Part 2 - Development locations where one new school is planned.

There are no development locations in scope for the Breckland area.



Part 3 - Growth areas with implications for existing schools

Dereham/Scarning/Toftwood

1000 homes

Area Overview

Dereham has had significant amount of housing over a sustained period however, the pressure for school places has not been evident in the primary phase. Parental preference continues to be evident across the town and surrounding villages, which continues to manage numbers in the area. The level of capacity in the primary phase allows for the spread of parental preference which could impact sustainability of certain schools over this sustained period of decline. The admission round for 2023 indicated 80 surplus places across the reception cohort for the schools in the planning area.

The two secondary schools within the town have some capacity against their catchment numbers, the pressure comes from parental preference, where Netherd admits pupils above its PAN and has for several years, so the school has reached capacity. Northgate continues to operate within its acceptable levels because of the draw to Netherd, the pressure mainly stems from out of area pupils which would be managed at admission rounds if required.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

The growth is currently contained for the immediate local area based on the delivery of expected housing, according to current forecasts. The Childrens Services Place Planning Team will continue to monitor the implications of the housing against the local school capacity.

Part 4 - Areas of the District indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Norfolk, as a rural county, is seeing some areas with considerable growth yet other areas with small and sometimes larger decline in pupil numbers. The Local Authority needs to plan effectively to ensure that provision matches the place needs. Whilst surplus places can sometimes facilitate improvement through parental preference patterns, they can also be a barrier to success. Surplus places create inefficiencies



in the school system, which individual institutions may find difficult to manage. The analysis below shows the level of surplus places and indicates some of the demographic trends. Larger schools can often manage both contraction and expansion of pupil numbers. School infrastructure officers and advisers will actively monitor the quality of education provided in any area and consider any action that may be needed, which could include:

1. Agree changes to the PAN (Planned Admission Number) with associated change to accommodation.
2. Conducting an area-based review, which could lead to
 - a. Schools joining a MAT or assessing the short-term collaboration via a federation.
 - b. Changing age range for a school
 - c. Merging schools in existing or newly provided buildings.
 - d. Close schools which have significant sustainability issues in the following areas: Pupil numbers, financial viability, staffing, education outcomes.

The local authority needs to ensure we maintain sustainable schools which meet the need of the local communities. We will review the capacity in schools against their overall building capacity and consider the geographical changes that may be occurring that could influence schools in certain communities. We must be clear this could where development is happening lead to closure of schools which may not be assessed as delivering a good education to our Norfolk children.

We will continue to work with schools to identify a RAG rating that they may fall into. We will continue to work with schools to ensure they are managing their estate as efficiently and effectively as possible, to ensure they continue to deliver the best education for their local communities.

1. Norfolk Planning Areas have been RAG rated to identify long term excess school places across each area:
 - a. Green – where there are sufficient places to match the catchment area numbers.
 - b. Amber – where there is 30+ spare places across the Planning Area but places are often filled with out of area children. These areas will be



monitored but with the expectation that either catchment number increase, or housing will solve the issue.

- c. Red – areas with considerable surplus places, limited housing, and catchment decline.

Information is based on the School Capacity Return which is sent to the Department for Education on an annual basis. The school planning areas are used to combine groups of school which have similar characteristics and operate within a similar geographical area. They may not link within the traditional catchment or feeder approach and may not strictly sit in the districts they have been included in.

Amber planning areas

Dereham Planning Area – a large planning area of 16 schools including the town of Dereham and its surrounding village schools. The area is seeing a significant reduction in the number of children moving into the primary phase against the available capacity in the schools. Secondary schools remain extremely popular across the town where there is no issue. The primary phase will need to assess their PAN numbers to consider how to manage with the reduction, some schools will need to assess the impacts against their own viability.

Old Buckenham Planning Area - a planning area with 6 primary schools included in relatively rural locations. Two schools have 1 full form of entry and remainder have a half form or lower. The catchment suggests a significant decline in available pupils, with parental preference being affected as a result. With limited development schools may need to consider organisational changes and PAN sizes to manage places.

Thetford Planning Area – this planning area has 8 primary phase schools and 1 secondary with a mix of infant, junior and primary. The catchment numbers suggest no significant increases which will impact local schools. The rate of parental preference moving pupils away from the town will affect those centrally located schools. Until housing begins to yield a higher proportion of pupils this trajectory may not change. The Secondary continues to see an increase in numbers due to previous growth in primary working through and a change in parental preference. The school does have capacity to accommodate these increased numbers, the area will need monitoring to assess changes relating to the housing yield.

Watton Planning Area – a planning area with 8 schools primary, infant, and junior. The centrally located schools have 3 forms of entry with the surrounding schools largely been half form of entry (15 places). Schools are largely underutilised against an area that has and is having development in the area. Suggests numbers of pupils are moving out of the area, which impacts both primary and secondary provision.



Red planning areas

Litcham Planning Area – a planning area of 10 schools only one school has a full form of entry. 5 of the schools have less than 65 pupils on role. Expected intake numbers are in decline and there is little housing in the area.

Broadland District

District Context

(Table 5 indicates total number and type of schools across the county)

Phase of School	All Through	Alt provision	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Broadland	0	0	0	52	7	1	60
Academies	24			LA Maintained		36	

Pupil Population

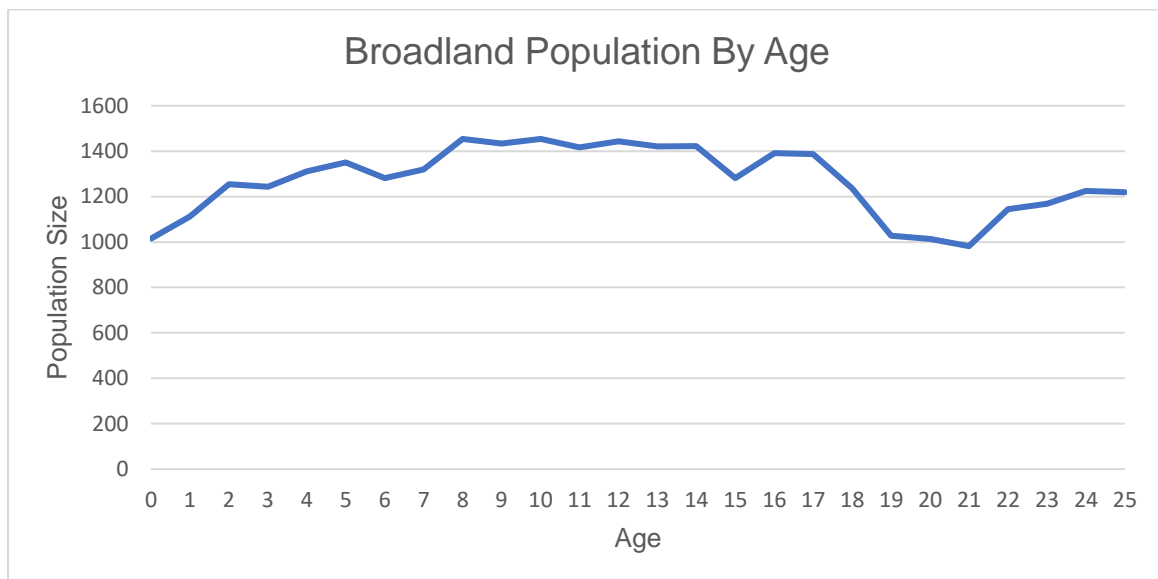
(Table 6 – Mainstream pupil population figures for Broadland for period 2016 to 2023)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary Places	9,854	10,058	10,020	10,089	10,016	10,007	9,864	9,877
Secondary Places	7,134	7,062	7,176	7,404	7,512	7,641	7,797	7,807
Total	16,988	17,120	17,196	17,493	17,528	17,648	17,661	17,684

(Figures taken from September census data each year. Data for 2023 has been taken from the May census count)

Pupil numbers across Broadland remain stable, pupils transitioning between primary and secondary phase education are on the increase. The forecast information suggests a decline continuing to impact the primary phase which may move to the secondary phase in a few years' time. Housing levels are not likely to affect this decline, numbers in the primary phase are expected to be lower than those seen in 2016 and could be as low as 9,000 pupils across the sector, whereas the secondary sector is set to reach 8,400 pupils over the next five years.

(Graph 3 Population size by Age taken from ONS census 2021 detail)



Numbers across Broadland were at their highest in 2011 and 2013 reaching 1,454 children. Current numbers are around 1,012 children under 1 which is slightly higher than the lowest child population reached in 2000.

Following possible adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan in 2024 we could expect to see housing delivery increase against those over the past year, based on implications from nutrient neutrality. We could anticipate larger housing developments across the region to commence onsite within the next two years, which will have some effect on the surrounding schools.

The total capacity across all schools in the area in the primary phase totalled 11,458 places the number on role across the same group of schools was 9,877 places identifying 1,581 surplus places. We expect the net change of places to increase by a further 177 places in this area with the movement between the existing Year 6 and the incoming Reception cohort. Increasing surplus places across the sector to 1,758 places across the primary age schools.

Part 1 - Major growth areas which will require multi-school solutions.

North Norwich growth triangle

Sprowston, Old Catton, Rackheath (Area within the GNLP)



Current local provision – capacity and organisation

There is still a significant number of homes expected to come forward across the area known as the Norwich Growth Triangle, this spans an area from Norwich Airport across to Postwick and between Sprowston up to Rackheath in the north.

Beeston Park delivering in the region of 3,500 homes could begin to move quickly once issues surrounding nutrient neutrality are resolved. Rackheath is another significant development adding just over 4,000 homes to this area and extensive community facilities.

Catchment numbers across the area remain quite static but with some delivery of housing will add to the capacity but shouldn't until the larger developments begin to make progress.

Secondary provision currently meets demand, with the additional capacity added into Sprowston Community Academy last year this will support the area until those larger developments begin to reach higher numbers of homes being delivered.

Latest assessment of growth

This is the largest development area across the LA, as well as those larger sites there is significant infill sites across this area which are at various stages of planning and others are currently being built out.

Housing delivery rate has not reached previous levels which is supporting existing infrastructure to meet need, it continues to be slow but could pick up based on changes with nutrient neutrality and the economic situation.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

There are currently excess surpluses across the planning areas that group the primary schools in this area. As development continues, we might see some higher year groups, years 4-6 impacted with some squeeze on places but it should balance across the next 5 years, offsetting higher cohorts with smaller lower year groups.

Secondary covers a vast area in this development area, but with the additional capacity added to Sprowston and movement across North Norwich the forecast indicates capacity across the next few years. This created from smaller cohorts working through from primary once the larger cohorts have progressed in the next couple of years.

Sufficiency response

This seeing a substantial concentration of development will mean we will continue to work with colleagues across the district and in the schools to assess the impacts as housing comes forward.

The forecasts continue to show a decline moving forward into the primary phase with new housing tending to yield older children in later year groups. This impact will need to be factored in to ensure schools can organise effectively.



The sites currently underway will begin to yield children slower than previously recognised which will be offset from capacity across the system, in secondary we will tackle any pressure via the admission round, managing preference where possible to not over subscribe schools unless accepted by the schools themselves.

Longer term we will be working with developers to assess how the planning comes forward and ensure we take steps to safeguard those sites outlined for primary and secondary provision, agree the trigger points to benefit the wider sector and balance against the timing of delivery ensuring not to create an overprovision of places.

It will be important to try and safeguard the secondary site at the earliest opportunity to reduce the need from pupils becoming displaced from the settlement to which they live, safeguarding this pupil's movement into the future.

Table 7. Capital response.

North Norwich Growth	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	Rackheath primary 1	2FE	Site identified	£11.0m (unfunded)	2026+
Future programme	Rackheath primary 2	2FE	Site identified	£11.0m (unfunded)	2028+
Future programme	Beeston Park primary 1	2FE	Site identified	£11.0m (unfunded)	2026+
Future programme	Beeston Park primary 2	2FE	Site identified	£11.0m (unfunded)	2029+
Future programme	South of Salhouse Rd new primary	2FE	Site identified, await transfer of land if required.	£11.0m (unfunded)	2025+
Future programme	Smee Lane North/South	2FE	Initial site layout options	£11.0m (unfunded)	2025+
Future programme	New high school	6-8FE tbc	Site identified agree specification	£40m (unfunded)	2026+



Part 2 - Development locations where one new school is planned.

Aylsham (Area within the GNLP)

500 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

There are currently nine primary schools across this planning area, three schools are centrally located which may be directly affected by this expected development. John of Gaunt Infant and Bure Valley provide 420 places of provision across them, and St Michael's C of E Primary offers 140 places. Secondary places are provided by Aylsham High School offering a minimum of 1025 places across five-year groups.

Latest assessment of growth

Aylsham has seen previous developments delivered which assessments have shown parental preference selecting schools from a wide range of locations, some of those been central to Aylsham and others across the wider area.

The LA has secured a school site as part of the Local Plan policy which will ensure based on this additional development, and any change in parental preference those moving into the area will have sufficient capacity to meet their need.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

Numbers remain quite stable and supporting schools in the local area, but the pattern of children selecting schools out of the town will support capacity in the short term. Centrally located schools are providing for catchment, with the catchment showing signs of decline until the further housing delivers additional homes it is expected schools can accommodate any additional pupils in the short term.

Sufficiency response

With a relatively small housing numbers coming forward Aylsham continues to be a popular area which is why the school site has been safeguarded as part of the 250-home development.

Schools across the area are expected to have marginally higher numbers in later year groups based on the forecasting trajectory, but this should be managed as part of the existing estate and offset from lower intake years expected in the future.

Children's Services Place Planning officers will continue to monitor the impact of the housing as it begins to come forward and assess the output of pupils against the existing school infrastructure.

Each assessment made will review the course of action to take in delivering the school meeting the need for the local community.



Aylsham High School continues to draw pupils from out of its catchment and local area which increases pressure on places, but the school has some capacity to accommodate this local need. S106 contributions have been received to support some school redesign and increase of capacity which will be to provide for additional pupils as required. Any risk of over provision of places will be managed between the LA and the school.

Table 8. Capital response.

Aylsham	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	Aylsham High School	Increase capacity	Section 106 contributions collected	-	2023/24
Future programme	New primary school	2FE	Site discussion underway	IRO £10.2m	2026+

Blofield/Brundall (Area within the GNLP)

Allocation for up to 400 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

This local area has its primary school places provided by mainly two schools – Blofield Primary (210 place) and Brundall School (315 place). Hemblington draws some children out of catchment and has consistently for a few years, this could be because of limited numbers being available in the centrally located schools.

All schools in the planning area are all through primary phase schools, two being maintained schools and the other two being academies with different trusts.

The primary schools feed into Thorpe St Andrew Secondary School. Based on existing preference patterns the secondary school is set to have capacity to meet demand of the developments in the area.

Latest assessment of growth

Three large housing developments have either commenced or have permission granted in this area which centre around the Blofield/Brundall area. Numbers in catchment appear high but preference spreads the children across the schools. We expect the development to yield the children sufficient to populate the additional form of entry, although it can take many years for the additional children to enter the system.



Current pressures on pupil numbers

Catchment numbers are more than the capacity of the local school's centred around the development scope. Adding an additional 1FE to Blofield Primary School will ensure those children have a school place within their local community.

Sufficiency response

Children's services continue to work on the land transfer for the school site which will provide a new school providing two forms of entry for Blofield Primary School. This will be a relocation and expansion of the existing school to accommodate the additional pupils expected to yield across the local area. As soon as the land transfer is complete, building work will commence with the anticipated opening of the new premises by January 2025.

Delays with the land transfer process have delayed the original project which anticipated an earlier opening in time for the new academic year.

Table 9. Capital response.

Blofield	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Current Programme	New primary school building	2FE primary school	Site acquisition and concept design complete	£11.2M (£1M CIL funding)	2023 opening 2024

Hellesdon (Area within the GNLP)

Allocation for up to 1000 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

Hellesdon has infant/junior schools situated across the area and a large and popular High School. The infant schools (Arden Grove, Heather Avenue and Kinsale) have 180 places per year group between them. These 3 infant schools feed into two junior schools – Firside Junior and Kinsale Junior.

Hellesdon High School continues to meet need across its local area, any pressure is from out of catchment pupils and could be managed via the admission round as required.

Latest assessment of growth

The hybrid planning application for this 1,000-home development was approved in 2016. The two phases 252 homes are on site with a large number of homes have



currently been completed, the phase 3 development remains currently held up with the nutrient neutrality situation.

With the delays expected with the remainder of the site and that contain the school site it is likely to be some years yet before the triggers to transfer the school land are reached.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

There is little impact from the existing housing delivery, and there is not expected to be pressure until closer towards the whole site has been delivered. Children's Services will continue to monitor the progress of the development and liaise with developers on the triggers for the proposed new school site when required.

Sufficiency response

A new school site has been safeguarded through a S106 agreement between Norfolk County Council and Persimmon Homes. With the scale of housing anticipated a new two form of entry primary is expected to come forward, but only when the provision is needed.

Nearer the time assessments will continue to assess the requirement of whether there will be a new school alongside existing provision or reorganisation occurs of existing infant/junior schools to provide for an all through primary school.

Local places within the existing secondary estate will be monitored and capacity will be assessed if any further expansion maybe required in the longer term.

Childrens Services officers will maintain communication with local councillors and school representatives to plan effectively for future demand.

Table 10. Capital response.

Hellesdon	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	2FE	Section 106 in place and site location agreed	IRO £11.0m	2027+
Future programme	High school	Expansion of Hellesdon High to be considered if necessary	-	-	-

Taverham (Area within the GNLP)

Strategic allocation for 1530 new homes



Current local provision – capacity and organisation

Taverham primary phase education is provided by two infant schools feeding into one junior school, both infant schools have an admission number of 60 and the junior school 120. Taverham High School is also located in the village which provides secondary education for the local area. Part of this development, to the eastern side, is within the Drayton primary phase school's catchment. This contains Drayton Infant and Junior school providing 90 places at each age group.

Latest assessment of growth

This site has come forward as a strategic allocation in the Greater Norwich Local Plan, an application was submitted in March 2022. Work continues to with key consultees to complete assessments of the overall development.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

There is minimal housing included in the existing forecast which indicates surplus capacity across this planning area. With a development expected of this size it is anticipated new primary provision will be required to meet the local community demand once existing capacity has been fully utilised. Schools in the area are managing their planned admission number to meet need and must continue to do so.

Sufficiency response

Children's Services Place Planning is continuing dialogue with the land agents and developers to secure a school site within the development.

It is Children's Services belief a development of this size will require additional education provision to meet need that will ensure a school is a central location for the new community.

We continue to monitor existing school numbers across the area and review forecast trends to assess any changes which may have implications on the local area. It would appear this area has an aging population which is impacting the numbers across the existing school infrastructure.

Children's Services will review the two-tier education establishments and have regard for the need for a single primary school provision understanding the impact this may have on the provision across the village. As the development timescales move forward Children's Services will engage in discussion with the schools in scope as appropriate about the introduction of a new school as may be required.

Table 11. Capital response.

Taverham	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	2FE	Site location continues	IRO £11.0m	2026+



Part 3 - Growth areas with implications for existing schools

Acle

700 homes

Area Overview

There are currently planning applications awaiting decision and additional sites earmarked as part of the Local Plan that could impact the school infrastructure across Acle. In both the local primary and secondary school's parental preference is high with limited movement out to surrounding areas. With additional housing coming forward across Brundall and Blofield and an increase in preference shown for the secondary, we could see a level of pressure growing in this area.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

Children's Services Place Planning will continue to monitor the housing progress across areas that have an impact on the schools of Acle. Both sites of the secondary and primary have confined sites but deliver their existing demand, if housing begins to have an impact an assessment of options that may be available will need to be considered, with consideration for the financial contributions via CIL expected. This might put a limitation on any project and solution required. The additional surplus across the wider planning area will need to be considered to not destabilise existing schools.

Part 4 - Areas of the District indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Norfolk, as a rural county, is seeing some areas with considerable growth yet other areas with small and sometimes larger decline in pupil numbers. The Local Authority needs to plan effectively to ensure that provision matches the place needs. Whilst surplus places can sometimes facilitate improvement through parental preference patterns, they can also be a barrier to success. Surplus places create inefficiencies in the school system, which individual institutions may find difficult to manage. The analysis below shows the level of surplus places and indicates some of the



demographic trends. Larger schools can often manage both contraction and expansion of pupil numbers. School infrastructure officers and advisers will actively monitor the quality of education provided in any area and consider any action that may be needed, which could include:

3. Agree changes to the PAN (Planned Admission Number) with associated change to accommodation.
4. Conducting an area-based review, which could lead to
 - a. Schools joining a MAT or assessing the short-term collaboration via a federation.
 - b. Changing age range for a school
 - c. Merging schools in existing or newly provided buildings.
 - d. Close schools which have significant sustainability issues in the following areas: Pupil numbers, financial viability, staffing, education outcomes.

The local authority needs to ensure we maintain sustainable schools which meet the need of the local communities. We will review the capacity in schools against their overall building capacity and consider the geographical changes that may be occurring that could influence schools in certain communities. We must be clear this could where development is happening lead to closure of schools which may not be assessed as delivering a good education to our Norfolk children.

We will continue to work with schools to identify a RAG rating that they may fall into. We will continue to work with schools to ensure they are managing their estate as efficiently and effectively as possible, in order to ensure they continue to deliver the best education for their local communities.

2. Norfolk Planning Areas have been RAG rated to identify long term excess school places across each area:
 - a. Green – where there are sufficient places to match the catchment area numbers.
 - b. Amber – where there is 30+ spare places across the Planning Area but places are often filled with out of area children. These areas will be monitored but with the expectation that either catchment number increase, or housing will solve the issue.



- c. Red – areas with considerable surplus places, limited housing, and catchment decline.

Information is based on the School Capacity Return which is sent to the Department for Education on an annual basis. The school planning areas are used to combine groups of school which have similar characteristics and operate within a similar geographical area. They may not link within the traditional catchment or feeder approach and may not strictly sit in the districts they have been included in.

Amber planning areas

Sprowston Planning Area - a planning area which consists of 10 primary phase schools, largely made up of infant and junior mix. Based on catchment numbers there are sufficient places to meet overall demand, but parental preference is drawing places out of the area which is making schools must adjust their PAN to plan for the impact. Large scale development is continuing across this area and some significant development will come forward over the next couple of years which should begin to fill the school system, schools will need to work together to plan for the short to medium term.

Spixworth and Horsford Planning Area – a planning area with 4 primary phase schools, 1 infant and 1 junior. Currently 100 places of capacity across all schools, 3 schools with less than half form of entry are expecting lower than their indicated Reception PAN. Schools will need to adjust future planning to accommodate the parental preference and falling roles in this area.

Red planning areas

Reepham Planning Area – a planning area with 8 primary schools and 1 secondary school. Each of the primary schools have 1FE or less, and 4 of the primary schools have continued to admit fewer than 15 pupils over a sustained period. The secondary school draws children from a wide area, local catchment is lower than intake PAN and the projected numbers are expected to further decline over the next three to five years. Schools must manage their planned admission numbers in line with available residents to plan for the future.



Great Yarmouth Borough Council

District Context

(Table 12 indicates total number and type of schools across the county)

Phase of School	All Through	Alt provision	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Great Yarmouth	0	0	0	30	6	2	38
Academies		25		LA Maintained		13	

Pupil Population

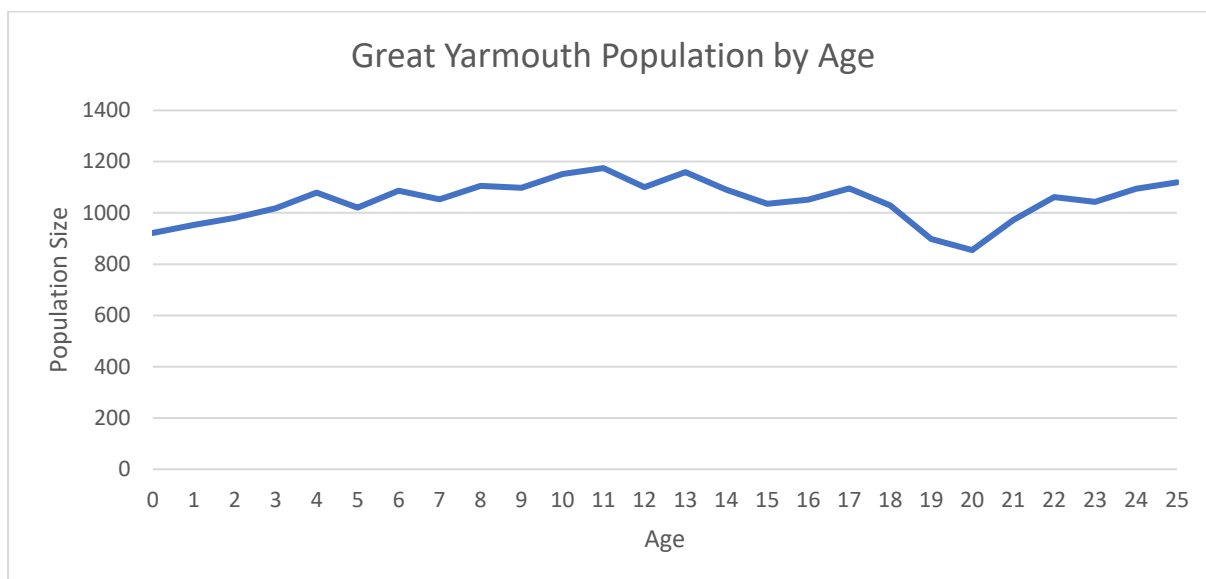
(Table 13 – Mainstream pupil population figures for Great Yarmouth for period 2016 to 2023)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary Places	7,748	7,901	7,781	7,704	7,634	7,601	7,554	7,605
Secondary Places	5,008	4,988	5,057	5,141	5,117	5,269	5,308	5,245
Total	12,756	12,889	12,838	12,845	12,751	12,870	12,862	12,850

(Figures taken from September census data each year. Data for 2023 has been taken from the May census count)

Primary numbers appear to show the apparent drop from 2017, and since 2020 those numbers have stayed relatively stable. The secondary phase suggests a steep increase from 2017 reaching a peak in 2022. The numbers for 2023 have been taken from the May census where we should expect to see a consistent or increasing position between September and May numbers, but the figures indicate something different. Based on the three census dates we see a reverse in both phases of the expected trend but continue to expect an increase of pupils moving across into secondary from the primary phase. This is largely due to increased housing and higher numbers in later year groups. The secondary sector is expected to reach a peak of 5,470 pupils by 2027 and primary numbers may fall following the 2023 academic year.

(Graph 4 Population size by Age taken from ONS census 2021 detail)



The highest cohort size reported via the ONS data suggests those pupils aged 11 being the highest in 2021, and from then on, those earlier cohorts sizes reduce over time. The proposed trajectory of decline does not show the level of decline experienced in this area in 2001 when there only appeared to be 855 children in this cohort, reducing numbers in the early years sector are a little higher than this all-time low, but we are yet to see how that continues.

This information does not include any effects of housing growth which is expected to be delivered over the life of the Local Plan.

The Local Plan is currently in Regulation 18 consultation stage with further drafts due later in 2023, when additional housing targets will be set. The last plan aimed to deliver 5,300 homes across the plan period and at the last count 2,489 homes had been delivered. Its anticipated further housing will come forward in the southern and northern parts of the Borough which will have some impact on those schools more closely situated.

The total capacity across all schools in the area in the primary phase totalled 8,701 places the number on role across the same group of schools was 7,605 places identifying 1,096 surplus places. We expect the net change of places to increase by a further 204 places in this area with the movement between the existing Year 6 and the incoming Reception cohort. Increasing surplus places across the sector to 1,300 places across the primary age schools.



Part 1 - Major growth areas which will require multi-school solutions.

There are no developments that fall within this category across Great Yarmouth.

Part 2 - Development locations where one new school is planned.

Bradwell

1000 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

The catchment schools for this new development are Hillside, Homefield and Woodlands Primary Schools who provide 120 places between them for each year group and share a large catchment area. The three schools are at very close to capacity, with little ability to deal with any in year movement of pupils. All local children are provided a place with some out of catchment children not able to have their first-choice preference met. The catchment secondary school is Lynn Grove Academy we need to assess their capacity as the development continues to build, to ensure sufficient places for local children.

Latest assessment of growth

The housing delivery has reached a point which meets criteria determined within the S106 agreement to schedule transfer of the school site and associated services. Norfolk County Council Children's Services are currently negotiating the trigger point to finalise the legal transfer with Persimmon.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

NCC officers are aware the pressure for places can take some time to yield the pupils that will need accommodating in the new school provision. We continue to assess the data and look at the options of provision that need to be delivered to meet the local need. In year admissions is causing a level of pressure in this area as the housing is inhabited which is causing a level of pressure for local residents. Conversations have occurred with the local schools and the local officer group to determine how best to deliver this school within the current landscape.



Sufficiency response

Children's Services are conducting a consultation on the relocation and expansion of Bradwell Homefield CE VC Primary that will move to the new site within this development area. The school will increase from its current one form of entry to two form's and due to the confined site provided, it will not be able to deliver nursery provision as part of its offer. The school is anticipated to open from September 2026, we continue to monitor the impact of the changing pupil numbers alongside the demographic changes in area against the wider development that is currently coming forward across the settlement.

The consultation closes on the 20th of October 2023, and it is hoped the land transfer will occur early in 2024 to enable development to commence shortly after.

Table 14. Capital response.

Bradwell	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	2FE	School land transfer to finalise and masterplan prepared	IRO £11.0m	2025

Caister-on-Sea

Allocation for up to 665 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

The local area has infant and junior schools which operate as a federation with one executive Headteacher, both schools have a PAN of 90. Secondary education is provided at Caister Academy operated by Creative Education Trust.

Latest assessment of growth

The planning application for 665 homes has recently been approved by Great Yarmouth Borough Council. The site has provision for a two forms of entry primary school within the heart of the new community. The local area does have other sites identified and being put forward within the update to the new Local Plan, those sites could contribute to increased capacity required beyond that currently available within the existing schools. Based on the locations of the existing schools and the new developments pupil movement may be improved by the new school location.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

The birth rate decline seen at a county level is evident in Caister with lower admission numbers at the infant phase which will draw through to the junior school.



To help with planning both schools have adjusted their planned admission number to accommodate the current reduction experienced. Caister Academy catchment will see the decline but preference that incorporates Great Yarmouth continues to sustain numbers within the school's capacity.

Sufficiency response

Children's Services Place Planning continues to work alongside the Borough council to ascertain the proposed impact of the approved application and if future changes to the Local Plan expect to have further implications for the schools in this area.

The S106 agreement includes criteria to consider the need for a new primary school within this development or alternative provide for developer contributions if the land may not be required. Local Authority officers will meet with local schools as plans develop to discuss the potential implications of the development in this area.

Table 15. Capital response.

Caister	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	2 FE	-	IRO £11.0m	2026+

Part 3 – Growth areas with implications for existing schools

Hopton

750 homes

Area Overview

Development sites have gradually come forward within the catchment for Hopton and currently a development for 200 homes is being built out. With sites earmarked for pending applications and those being proposed in the new Local Plan we could expect a level of pressure increasing on the existing one form entry primary school. The school sits on a confined site with little room for expansion. The catchment area for the school abuts Ormiston Cliff Park to the north where some development is being proposed and this could see pupil movement across into Cliff Park as opposed to the development's catchment school of Hopton. We would need to consider the implications of this effect and how parental preference may be met.



Infrastructure Growth Requirements

Children's Service Place Planning continues to liaise with the Borough planning department on the implications across this school catchment. With the site being very small and the potential for additional growth we might have expected available space for two forms of entry to meet this level of housing yield that has come forward around the school. With it being very early stages in terms of the update to the Local Plan and pending development applications Place Planning will need to monitor the effect of housing across the wider area and discuss with the school and Academy Trust what action is likely to be possible to meet need.

Part 4 - Areas of the District indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Norfolk, as a rural county, is seeing some areas with considerable growth yet other areas with small and sometimes larger decline in pupil numbers. The Local Authority needs to plan effectively to ensure that provision matches the place needs. Whilst surplus places can sometimes facilitate improvement through parental preference patterns, they can also be a barrier to success. Surplus places create inefficiencies in the school system, which individual institutions may find difficult to manage. The analysis below shows the level of surplus places and indicates some of the demographic trends. Larger schools can often manage both contraction and expansion of pupil numbers. School infrastructure officers and advisers will actively monitor the quality of education provided in any area and consider any action that may be needed, which could include:

5. Agree changes to the PAN (Planned Admission Number) with associated change to accommodation.
6. Conducting an area-based review, which could lead to
 - a. Schools joining a MAT or assessing the short-term collaboration via a federation.
 - b. Changing age range for a school
 - c. Merging schools in existing or newly provided buildings.
 - d. Close schools which have significant sustainability issues in the following areas: Pupil numbers, financial viability, staffing, education outcomes.



The local authority needs to ensure we maintain sustainable schools which meet the need of the local communities. We will review the capacity in schools against their overall building capacity and consider the geographical changes that may be occurring that could influence schools in certain communities. We must be clear this could where development is happening lead to closure of schools which may not be assessed as delivering a good education to our Norfolk children.

We will continue to work with schools to identify a RAG rating that they may fall into. We will continue to work with schools to ensure they are managing their estate as efficiently and effectively as possible, in order to ensure they continue to deliver the best education for their local communities.

3. Norfolk Planning Areas have been RAG rated to identify long term excess school places across each area:
 - a. Green – where there are sufficient places to match the catchment area numbers.
 - b. Amber – where there is 30+ spare places across the Planning Area but places are often filled with out of area children. These areas will be monitored but with the expectation that either catchment number increase, or housing will solve the issue.
 - c. Red – areas with considerable surplus places, limited housing, and catchment decline.

Information is based on the School Capacity Return which is sent to the Department for Education on an annual basis. The school planning areas are used to combine groups of school which have similar characteristics and operate within a similar geographical area. They may not link within the traditional catchment or feeder approach and may not strictly sit in the districts they have been included in.

Amber planning areas

Gorleston Planning Area – The Gorleston area is made up of 15 schools, a large geographical area with 13 primary schools and 1 infant and 1 junior. The eastern part of this planning area that falls between the A47 and the river has very limited opportunity for development, and we see numbers for the schools across this area in decline and below their planned admission number. Growth continues across the western side of this planning area and the schools are not impacted as much by significant falling roles. We do not yet see a reverse in the birth rate decline and therefore expect some further shrinking of the population in the eastern part of the planning area and therefore schools will need to manage their intake cohorts to accommodate the reductions to assist with planning.



Red planning areas

Flegg Planning Area – The planning area consists of 8 schools, primary, infant, and junior and one secondary school. There remains significant decline in this area with almost 130 spare places across the schools in the primary phase. The secondary has a surplus of one form of entry on the planned admission number with this trajectory expected to continue over the next few years. There is some development expected in an around Martham, Ormesby and Hemsby but it is relatively small scale and will not affect the capacity that exists across the area. The surplus capacity allows for flexibility in parental preference and can hinder school's ability to plan accordingly.

Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

District Context

(Table 16 indicates total number and type of schools across the county)

Phase of School	All Through	Alt provision	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	1	0	2	66	7	2	78
Academies		56		LA Maintained		22	

Pupil Population

(Table 17 – Mainstream pupil population figures for Kings Lynn for period 2016 to 2023)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary Places	10,842	10,978	11,024	10,935	10,916	10,835	10,684	10,717
Secondary Places	6,602	6,602	6,612	6,777	6,872	7,010	7,206	7,138
Total	17,444	17,580	17,636	17,712	17,788	17,845	17,890	17,855

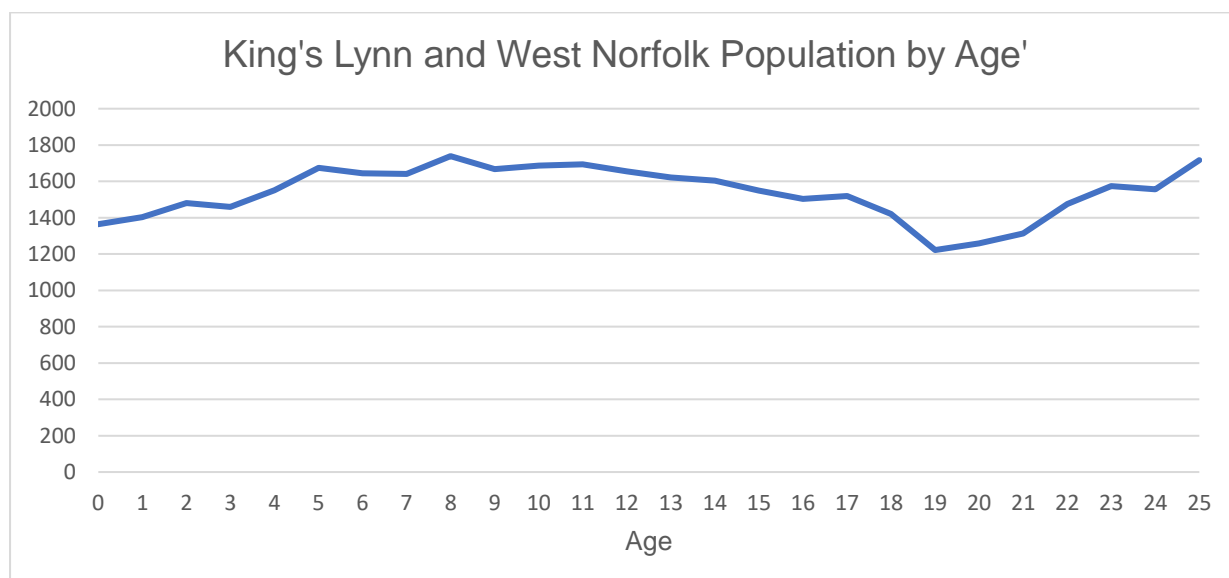
(Figures taken from September census data each year. Data for 2023 has been taken from the May census count)



Norfolk County Council

The data shows a primary phase in decline reaching a level of stability between 2022 and 2023 numbers, forecasting beyond this point suggests a gradual decline not counteracted by the impact of housing across the area. Secondary pupils show an increase in pupil numbers from 2019 onwards, our forecast suggests with housing numbers will grow further into 2023 and beyond. This period of increased numbers transitioning into secondary remains for the next three years when the primary numbers behind this period then begin to show a level of decline. This does not in the forecast take account of additional large-scale housing that is anticipated to come forward included within the Local Plan.

(Graph 5 Population size by Age taken from ONS census 2021 detail)



The highest cohort size reported via the ONS data suggests those pupils aged 8 being the highest in 2021, and from then on, those earlier cohorts sizes reduce over time. The lowest cohort entering the school system across this area was back in 2004 when there were 517 fewer children across the reception age range.

This information does not include any effects of housing growth which is expected to be delivered over the life of the Local Plan. Our forecast estimates housing will have some impact against the decline, this will not offset the impact of the birth rate decline over the next five years, until larger housing development begins to make progress.

The new emerging Local Plan is currently under examination by the inspectorate, timescales for adoption are currently unclear. The last plan aimed to deliver 16,500 homes across the plan period which 11,381 homes were delivered. The emerging plan has a target currently of 12,057 houses to be delivered across the new period with large sites expect across West Winch, Wootton and Kingsfleet.



The total capacity across all schools in the area in the primary phase totalled 12,247 places, the number on role across the same group of schools was 10,771 places identifying 1,476 surplus places. We expect the net change of places to increase by a further 175 places in this area with the movement between the existing Year 6 and the incoming Reception cohort. Increasing surplus places across the sector to 1,651 places across the primary age schools.

Part 1 - Major growth areas which will require multi-school solutions.

West Winch/North Runcton

Up to 4000 new homes in multiple phases:
1100 up to 2026
2900 post 2027

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

West Winch village is situated to the south of King's Lynn with geographically a large catchment area and one primary school of 210 places. The development will slightly overlap into the Middleton Primary catchment area, which has maximum capacity for 140 places. West Winch is popular and fills its reception intake each year drawing pupils from other schools' catchments. Middleton primary is further south of West Winch and struggles to retain its catchment pupils, reception numbers began to decline from 2018 onwards. Secondary School places for this area are provided by the three secondary schools within King's Lynn. Secondary provision is experiencing some pressure although it is being managed currently.

Latest assessment of growth

West Winch is a large strategic allocation for King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council. It is not unusual for an allocation of this size to take some years to come to forward. Hopkins Homes Ltd. Has submitted an outline planning application for 1,100 homes to the north part of the overall site. An important part for the development to move forward is to bring forward the road infrastructure to the area which is being led by NCC. It is likely to lead to expansion of the existing primary school with the need for two further schools situated to the north and south of the development area, land has been secured to support these projects.



Current pressures on pupil numbers

The current West Winch primary catchment remains lower than the schools PAN and is expected to remain stable for a period of time. Middleton's numbers in area decrease over time remaining in the low 20's in the future. The forecasting data does not currently include the impact of the large-scale housing development and will only impact the pupil trajectory once housing begins to become occupied. More central schools of the planning area see some effect of housing where housing is coming forward across the central King's Lynn Area.

The secondary schools are working with the LA to meet the demand in the area, they currently have sufficient places to meet demand, but this is very quickly being filled. Plans are being formalised to expand Kings Lynn Academy to meet demand expected in the secondary sector, this school has been assessed as having the capacity to expand on its existing site against the other two in the town.

Sufficiency response

The plan to expand and develop the education infrastructure in alongside this development will come forward over a long period of time and in a phased way. Currently there is space on the existing West Winch site to expand via a further 1FE to grow alongside the development. This will be managed alongside surplus space in other surrounding schools in order to not destabilise schools. Based on the size and scale of this proposed development it will take some time to begin to impact existing schools, with the secondary impacted much later in the programme. Children's Services Place Planning will monitor the impact of in year movement to assess that trend and liaise with schools as appropriate.

There are contributions being sort that will support the expansion of West Winch Primary and land provided in the north and south elements of the development that will come forward against the proposed phasing of the housing. King's Lynn Academy will grow in a staged way that will meet demand over time. The initial phase will aim to deliver eight forms of entry with a maximum of ten forms of entry being added if required.



Table 18. Capital response.

West Winch/ North Runcton	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	West Winch Primary	1 to 2FE	-	IRO £5m	2026+
Future programme	New primary 1	2FE	-	IRO £11.0m	2028+
Future programme	New primary 2	3FE	-	IRO £12m	2030+
Future programme	King's Lynn secondary phase	Expansion	Expansion to 8FE in design phase.	£5.5M	2025

Part 2 - Development locations where one new school is planned.

There are no developments that fall within this category for King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

Part 3 – Growth areas with implications for existing schools

Downham Market

640 homes

Area Overview

There are two large housing sites planned and with permission to the north and south of the central town, and smaller developments which impact on the overall housing yield expected to affect the schools in this area. As with many areas across Norfolk the primary phase has felt the pressure moving through with numbers now in decline and surplus capacity expected. The higher year groups are in transition between primary and secondary, and a change of preference the central Downham Market High school have become under pressure for places, also contributing to this was a rationalisation of accommodation across the site, moving the sixth form provision within the mainstream school area.



Infrastructure Growth Requirements

Increased demand has materialised across the secondary phase with continued catchment and preference growth. The historic movement of pupils selecting Cambridge has reduced due to capacity in those schools and the preference trend changing. The Capital Priorities Group have agreed early design work to consider how expansion work could take place to grow by one form of entry to accommodate the growth moving through the age ranges.

King's Lynn Knight's Hill

635 homes

Area Overview

The outline planning permission was approved after a public enquiry. We continue to wait for a further development of this site and receive detail of the first phases. The development boundary falls within the Sandringham and West Newton catchment, with an element of the site within Reffley' area. Based on the proximity to Reffley any pupils that are generated could decide to attend Reffley before their catchment school, which is to the northeast of the development boundary.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

Schools in this immediate area currently appear to have capacity, with catchment numbers currently operating below the PAN for each school but they do stay at quite consistent numbers over the next five years. Preference patterns does have impact in area with the Reffley school seeing a decline against its catchment numbers, where pupils choose surrounding schools over it, and Sandringham does see some increase from its catchment based on preference, although is a small school under 105. The level of preference being expressed is causing some operational issues for schools in this area and the additional housing will contribute to this problem and may make some schools unviable before the development begins to impact the area.

South Wootton

530 homes

Area Overview

The housing numbers are made up of two sites one north of the junior school and another northwest, both applications have been granted permission. The area is served by an infant and junior school, both schools are Local Authority maintained currently. The infant site is a little more confined by the existing community, with the junior slightly larger, confined by one side of the existing community and will be



landlocked by the new larger development. For local children there is sufficient places for pupils in the area, both schools are popular with surrounding families. There is also an element of movement between South Wootton families and North Wootton in both directions, this has been somewhat of an historical trend.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

The expected homes will generate a level of need within the existing local schools, which will impact existing preference and reduce the numbers of pupils coming into the catchment area. The larger development currently provides for a parcel of land to allow expansion of the junior school if required. Decisions will be made in conjunction with local schools as the development begin onsite to secure long term places for local children.

Wisbech

550 homes in Norfolk

Area Overview

The 550 homes have come forward as part of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's Local Plan, this is annexed by the potential of a large housing development coming forward as part of the Fenland District Council Local Plan. The Fenland plan is currently under review and could determine what level of impact this has on the proposed site for King's Lynn. We continue to collaborate with both councils to establish how this could impact on the surrounding schools on both sides of the border.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

We have reviewed the demand for places in the surrounding schools and undertaken some analysis to assess what solution might be sought if either of the scenarios occur. There was agreement to pass the agreed Section 106 contributions across to Cambridgeshire to meet demand of the larger scale development. If Fenland removed the entire large-scale development in Cambridgeshire, we would again assess the implications of this with colleagues in the LPA and see at that point what are the likely implications for local schools. School numbers are in decline across Norfolk, but this level of development would be difficult to accommodate in both primary and secondary phases. We will continue to assess the options and liaise with colleagues across the LA to develop an outcome that meets our statutory obligations and supports the children as appropriate.



Part 4 - Areas of the District indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Norfolk, as a rural county, is seeing some areas with considerable growth yet other areas with small and sometimes larger decline in pupil numbers. The Local Authority needs to plan effectively to ensure that provision matches the place needs. Whilst surplus places can sometimes facilitate improvement through parental preference patterns, they can also be a barrier to success. Surplus places create inefficiencies in the school system, which individual institutions may find difficult to manage. The analysis below shows the level of surplus places and indicates some of the demographic trends. Larger schools can often manage both contraction and expansion of pupil numbers. School infrastructure officers and advisers will actively monitor the quality of education provided in any area and consider any action that may be needed, which could include:

7. Agree changes to the PAN (Planned Admission Number) with associated change to accommodation.
8. Conducting an area-based review, which could lead to
 - a. Schools joining a MAT or assessing the short-term collaboration via a federation.
 - b. Changing age range for a school
 - c. Merging schools in existing or newly provided buildings.
 - d. Close schools which have significant sustainability issues in the following areas: Pupil numbers, financial viability, staffing, education outcomes.

The local authority needs to ensure we maintain sustainable schools which meet the need of the local communities. We will review the capacity in schools against their overall building capacity and consider the geographical changes that may be occurring that could influence schools in certain communities. We must be clear this could where development is happening lead to closure of schools which may not be assessed as delivering a good education to our Norfolk children.

We will continue to work with schools to identify a RAG rating that they may fall into. We will continue to work with schools to ensure they are managing their estate as efficiently and effectively as possible, in order to ensure they continue to deliver the best education for their local communities.



4. Norfolk Planning Areas have been RAG rated to identify long term excess school places across each area:
 - a. Green – where there are sufficient places to match the catchment area numbers.
 - b. Amber – where there is 30+ spare places across the Planning Area but places are often filled with out of area children. These areas will be monitored but with the expectation that either catchment number increase, or housing will solve the issue.
 - c. Red – areas with considerable surplus places, limited housing, and catchment decline.

Information is based on the School Capacity Return which is sent to the Department for Education on an annual basis. The school planning areas are used to combine groups of school which have similar characteristics and operate within a similar geographical area. They may not link within the traditional catchment or feeder approach and may not strictly sit in the districts they have been included in.

Amber planning areas

Hunstanton Planning Area – There are 8 primary phase schools within this area, current schools' capacity is 1,131 places and being required is 889 places giving 242 surplus places. Parental preference is ensuring some schools have higher numbers than building capacity allows, which impacts the pupil's movement in this area. There is limited development in most of this planning area with housing coming forward closer to main towns and settlements. The high school continues to meet demand which appears stable over the next five years.

Methwold Planning Area – this planning area has 8 schools for primary and secondary phase. 6 of the schools have lower than one form of entry (30 places). There are some very small catchments across this area which are below current planned admission numbers, with limited housing this will begin to impact sustainable class sizes in the sector.

Downham Market Planning Area – there are 13 schools in this planning area, 5 schools near the town and the remainder in outlying villages across the area. 5 of the primary phase schools have an admission number of 10 or less and the forecasts indicate continued decline to the reception number. There are some specific schools which continue to operate below both building and PAN capacity which will impact long term sustainability. Secondary remains stable based on the primary numbers working through. Development is expected with a limited number of completions to date, but we continue to monitor the impact in area on the secondary school as



developments begin to come forward and manage the effect of in year pupil movements with our Admission colleagues.

Red planning areas

King's Lynn Area Planning Area – this planning is all primary phase schools around the central area of King's Lynn. There are 8 schools with a mix of faith and non-faith primary schools. There is expected growth near to West Winch, but more rural locations have very limited opportunity of housing coming forward. Catchments are all lower than the schools current operating PAN and preference therefore is high, as pupil numbers reduce further this will challenge the sustainability of some schools within this area. There are currently 174 spare places across this group of schools, managing the organisation of the cohorts and planning for further decline will be key for schools.

North Norfolk District Council

District Context

(Table 19 indicates total number and type of schools across the county)

Phase of School	All Through	Alt provision	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
North Norfolk	0	1	0	46	7	3	57
Academies		26		LA Maintained		31	

Pupil Population

(Table 20 – Mainstream pupil population figures for North Norfolk for period 2016 to 2023)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary Places	6,055	6,046	5,983	5,913	5,798	5,698	5,552	5,577
Secondary Places	3,938	3,950	4,048	4,139	4,182	4,226	4,337	4,326
Total	9,993	9,996	10,031	10,052	9,980	9,924	9,889	9,903

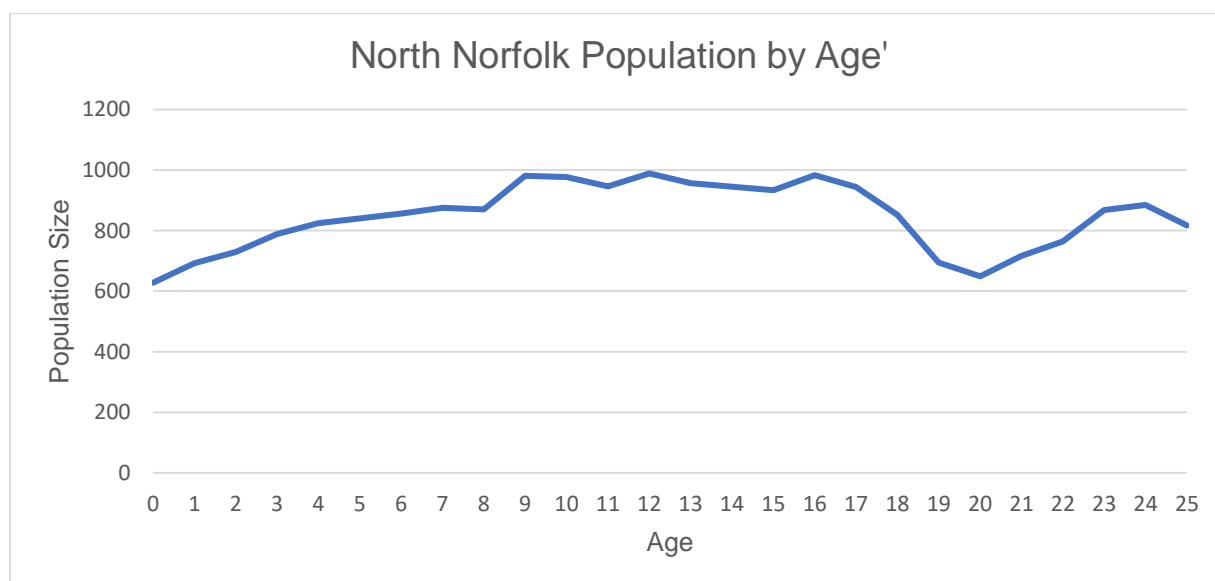
(Figures taken from September census data each year. Data for 2023 has been taken from the May census count)

Numbers across the district fell between 2017 and 2022 with a slight increase shown in 2023, this fits with the expect Reception cohort entering the system for September 2023 where it shows a very slight increase on last year. Some of this could be in relation to housing but also parental preference patterns across the border areas.



It is anticipated with the higher cohorts moving through the primary phase into secondary, the numbers in the primary sector will reduce over time and will only change based on additional development and a reverse in the birth rate decline. Secondary sectors continue to grow while the higher year groups move through but will only remain at increased levels in some instance for the next five years or so, until the smaller groups begin to appear.

(Graph 6 Population size by Age taken from ONS census 2021 detail)



The highest cohort size reported via the ONS data suggests those pupils aged 12 being the highest in 2021, and then we see slow and gradual decline down as far as 693 children aged 1.

This information does not include any effects of housing growth which is expected to be delivered over the life of the Local Plan. Our forecast estimates housing will have some impact against the decline, but we are not expecting numbers to return to those high seen back in 2011.

The existing Local Plan which ran for period of 2001-2025 set targets of 8,025 homes to be completed within that plan period, the housing delivered reached 8,347. The updated emerging plan sets an increased target of 12,096 homes to be delivered across a similar plan period, this represents an increase of 4,071 homes expected across North Norfolk.

The total capacity across all schools in the area in the primary phase totalled 7,643 places, the number on role across the same group of schools was 5,577 places identifying 2,066 surplus places. We expect the net change of places to increase by



a further 185 places in this area with the movement between the existing Year 6 and the incoming Reception cohort. Increasing surplus places across the sector to 2,251 places across the primary age schools.

Part 1 - Major growth areas which will require multi-school solutions.

There are no developments that fall within this category for North Norfolk.

Part 2 - Development locations where one new school is planned.

Fakenham

Allocation of 950 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

Children have both an infant and a junior school in the town and if they wish there is the offer of smaller village schools surrounding Fakenham. Both Fakenham Infant and Junior School are run by Synergy Multi Academy Trust. The infant school reduced its PAN from 90 to 60 to enable it to deal with the issue of the falling birth rate, catchment numbers continue to show a level of decline across the area. Secondary provision for Fakenham children is provided at Fakenham Academy run by Sapientia Academy Trust. The Academy provides education to both the 11-16 age range and 16-18 range. Catchment identifies higher numbers than their PAN allows but parental preference continues to play a part in where families choose to send their children, allowing the number of children to be accommodated.

Latest assessment of growth

The major growth site to the north of Fakenham was approved at NCC Cabinet in October 2021 and a Section 106 has been signed that secures land for a new 2FE Primary school building and financial contributions towards the building of that school. The land is being marketed by Trinity College, there has been no further movement on this site coming forward at the current time. Pupil numbers in area continue to be monitored for both reception and year 7, we are awaiting the land being sold and a reserved matters application being submitted.



Current pressures on pupil numbers

With a decline in birth rates across the County and limited development expected in Fakenham catchment numbers have fallen over the last three years which is why the infant and junior schools have adjusted their planned admissions numbers. Parental preference drives movement of pupils across the area with a wide selection of schools being chosen out of the central town catchment. We must monitor this pattern to assess when the schools may need to increase their PAN once again and we will work with admission colleagues to adapt as required.

Sufficiency response

The size of the proposed development will create a substantial number of pupils based on the county pupil yield assessment. Changes in the forecast alongside information received from district colleagues in relation to progress in the development will be used to monitor the situation across Fakenham. Discussions did take place with Synergy Mult Academy Trust and will need to be revisited once further detail becomes available.

Colleagues from both Place Planning and Admissions will work with all schools in this area to assess any changes in projection and take action to support places being secured as parents require.

Table 21. Capital response.

Fakenham	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	2FE	Section 106 agreed.	IRO £11.0m	2027+
Future programme	Possible expansion to Fakenham Academy	Unknown at present	-	-	-

North Walsham

1800 homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

North Walsham includes 3 primary phased schools and 1 secondary school. There is an infant and junior school providing 60 places per age group operated by Broad Horizons Academy Trust and Millfield Primary School has a PAN of 45 operated by



Enrich Learning Trust. The secondary school has capacity of 950 places also operated by Enrich Learning Trust.

The primary phase as a combined catchment overall capacity across the primary schools could reach 135 places across the three settings, but due to reduced numbers in the catchment the infant and junior has reduced its PAN accordingly. The secondary school has high numbers but battles parental preference for areas outside of the town.

Latest assessment of growth

The proposed Strategic Urban Extension of North Walsham is proposed to deliver 1,800 homes across the western side of the town, it will be a consortium of developers coming together to deliver the programme. A site for a new school has been secured as part of the plan which will be near other community facilities. The proposed school will have a site allocated of just over 2Ha and is planned for being 2 forms of entry primary.

Children's Services continues to work with the district to bring forward the project, it will form a key part of the emerging Local Plan.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

As stated previously the catchment numbers have declined across this area over the course of six years. The numbers in area do appear to have reached a particular low and remain static at that point servicing places for approximately 100 places. Clearly this reduction in numbers will impact those centrally located schools and the infant and junior schools have adapted their PAN to manage the numbers expected. Alongside the decline in catchment parental preference appears to have changed reducing the numbers of pupils entering those schools from elsewhere.

Due to the size of this development, it is expected a new school will be required but the new school will be scheduled alongside the existing capacity to ensure the school infrastructure is not destabilised as the development comes forward.

Sufficiency response

A new 2FE primary school is part of the masterplan and Children's Services Place Planning will work alongside district and developer colleagues to plan the required triggers for the new school. When the development comes forward which may not be for another 3-4 years, we will engage in conversations with the schools in the area to discuss the delivery plan and how we may mitigate the impact of the new school on the existing estate.

The size and scale of this development will take some time to fully deliver, and the school is situated in the central part of the development, it is likely housing will build up to either the north or south of the development so assessing the impact of delivery against the school capacity will be key in long term planning for the area.



Table 22. Capital response.

North Walsham	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	2FE	Site location assessed	£11.0m	2028+
Future programme	Possible expansion to North Walsham Academy	Unknown at present	-	-	-

Part 3 – Growth areas with implications for existing schools

Holt

250-400 homes

Area Overview

Existing and future development has led to assessment of need for a new primary school to come forward. Land has been secured as part of an outline approved planning application which will deliver 110 dwellings with associated infrastructure. The existing school is situated on a confined site with separate playing fields, the new development gives an opportunity to improve the primary school provision in the area.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

A new 2FE primary school will be delivered in a central location of this development which will allow the existing school to relocate and expand onto the new site. This will provide additional places to meet future demand across perspective sites within the new Local Plan.



Part 4 - Areas of the District indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Norfolk, as a rural county, is seeing some areas with considerable growth yet other areas with small and sometimes larger decline in pupil numbers. The Local Authority needs to plan effectively to ensure that provision matches the place needs. Whilst surplus places can sometimes facilitate improvement through parental preference patterns, they can also be a barrier to success. Surplus places create inefficiencies in the school system, which individual institutions may find difficult to manage. The analysis below shows the level of surplus places and indicates some of the demographic trends. Larger schools can often manage both contraction and expansion of pupil numbers. School infrastructure officers and advisers will actively monitor the quality of education provided in any area and consider any action that may be needed, which could include:

9. Agree changes to the PAN (Planned Admission Number) with associated change to accommodation.
10. Conducting an area-based review, which could lead to
 - a. Schools joining a MAT (Multi Academy Trust) or assessing the short-term collaboration via a federation.
 - b. Changing age range for a school
 - c. Merging schools in existing or newly provided buildings.
 - d. Close schools which have significant sustainability issues in the following areas: Pupil numbers, financial viability, staffing, education outcomes.

The local authority needs to ensure we maintain sustainable schools which meet the need of the local communities. We will review the capacity in schools against their overall building capacity and consider the geographical changes that may be occurring that could influence schools in certain communities. We must be clear this could where development is happening lead to closure of schools which may not be assessed as delivering a good education to our Norfolk children.

We will continue to work with schools to identify a RAG rating that they may fall into. We will continue to work with schools to ensure they are managing their estate as efficiently and effectively as possible, in order to ensure they continue to deliver the best education for their local communities.



5. Norfolk Planning Areas have been RAG rated to identify long term excess school places across each area:
- a. Green – where there are sufficient places to match the catchment area numbers.
 - b. Amber – where there is 30+ spare places across the Planning Area but places are often filled with out of area children. These areas will be monitored but with the expectation that either catchment number increase, or housing will solve the issue.
 - c. Red – areas with considerable surplus places, limited housing, and catchment decline.

Information is based on the School Capacity Return which is sent to the Department for Education on an annual basis. The school planning areas are used to combine groups of school which have similar characteristics and operate within a similar geographical area. They may not link within the traditional catchment or feeder approach and may not strictly sit in the districts they have been included in.

Amber planning areas

Cromer and Sheringham Planning Area – this area has 11 schools; forecasts indicate falling catchment numbers with limited development that may only affect certain schools. The schools clearly admit children from out of catchment due to parental preference compared to the actual numbers in the catchment areas. 6 schools have below 30 pupils in reception and decline in their catchment is currently being forecast. The secondary phase has some spare capacity, with larger cohorts working their way through the school any development could take some time before it affects the pupils entering this phase.

Fakenham Planning Area – is a market town with an infant and junior in the centre with many village schools around it. There are 8 schools in this planning area, 3 schools have a PAN of below 15. The large infant has managed their PAN to accommodate the decline in area. Individual schools may have some lasting sustainability issues which the LA will need to address.

North Walsham Planning Area – this planning area has 10 schools including infant, junior, primary, and secondary. The schools centred around North Walsham have consistent numbers that appear stable. Catchment numbers in all but 1 school are lower than what their PAN determines, with preference appearing to stay quite static. A large strategic development is planned the LA will need to monitor growth based on current capacity and liaise with some particularly vulnerable schools accordingly.



Red planning areas

Stalham Planning Area – The planning consists of 8 primary phase schools only one school has a PAN over 1FE, remainder are small rural schools. There is considerable capacity across the area allowing parental preference to be high. Limited housing will not impact the schools, the decline is reduction of pupil's overtime and surplus places not being adjusted accordingly. With the High school drawing from its catchment the lower numbers will begin to impact the secondary sector in the next 3-5 years.

Wells Planning Area – There are 6 schools all primary all through schools in this planning area. One school in this area has 1 full FE the remaining schools has a half form of entry or lower. There is significant capacity across the primary sector and the catchment for the secondary is below the operating capacity with the school drawing pupils from Hunstanton and Fakenham regularly. The LA will monitor the area and continue to work with schools which may have some sustainability concerns to plan to meet educational demands.

Norwich City Council

District Context

(Table 23 indicates total number and type of schools across the county)

Phase of School	All Through	Alt provision	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Norwich	0	0	1	34	8	5	48
Academies		31		LA Maintained		17	

Pupil Population

(Table 24 – Mainstream pupil population figures for Norwich for period 2016 to 2023)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary Places	9,292	9,425	9,456	9,427	9,242	9,200	9,281	9,462
Secondary Places	4,932	4,961	5,134	5,340	5,528	5,619	5,781	5,776
Total	14,224	14,386	14,590	14,767	14,770	14,819	15,062	15,238

(Figures taken from September census data each year. Data for 2023 has been taken from the May census count)

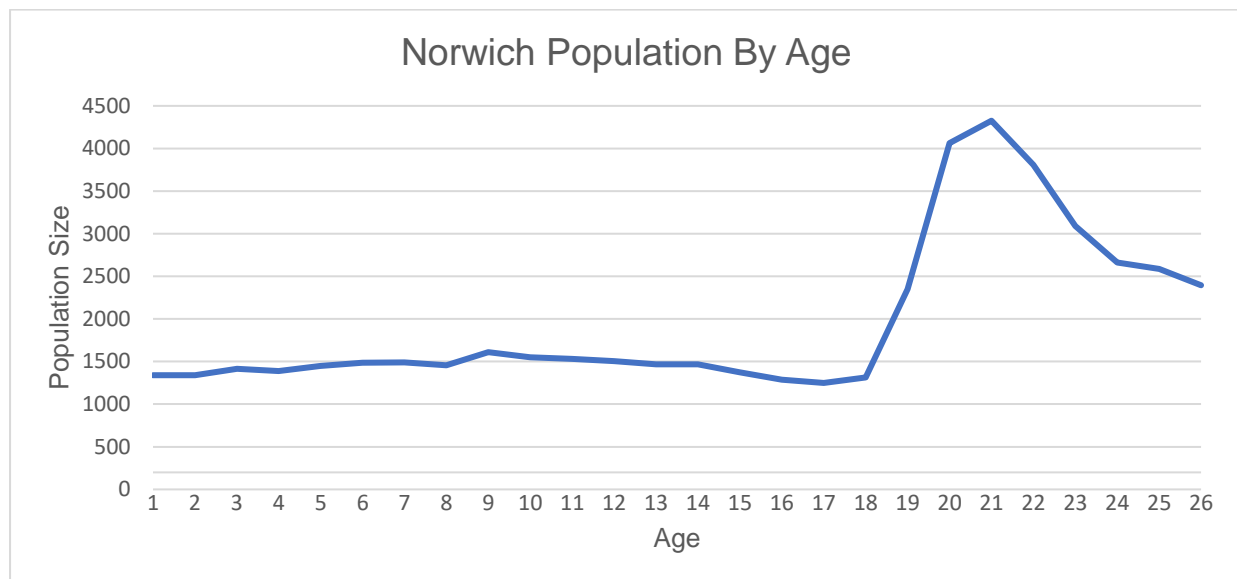
The figures indicate a slight increase between 2022 and 2023 in the primary phase, when reviewing actual cohort numbers, it is not the children entering in Reception



cohorts, its later year groups Year 4 to 6 where the increase has grown over this period. This is a common theme across the county which suggests internal movement across the LA into central areas and more urban areas.

The secondary cohorts will grow further with increases expected to reach a peak by 2027, this tracks those higher cohorts from primary moving through into the secondary sector.

(Graph 7 Population size by Age taken from ONS census 2021 detail)



The highest cohort size reported via the ONS data suggests those pupils aged 20 being the highest in 2021, there is then a significant reduction in the cohorts across Norwich, reaching a low of 1249 pupils aged 16 and then it appears to stabilise and remain relatively constant. This significant high did not impact the school age population it is as a result of inward migration at post 18 for education and employment purposes.

This information does not include any effects of housing growth which is expected to be delivered over the life of the Local Plan. Our forecast estimates housing will have some impact against the decline, this will be expected in the longer term beyond 2027, this is after reaching an absolute low of approximately 1,175 pupils entering the reception age cohorts. It is a very slow and long-term position and similar to those numbers seen in 2005. Even with the impact of housing the numbers are not likely to increase substantially.

Following possible adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan in 2024 we could expect to see housing delivery increase against those over the past year, based on implications from nutrient neutrality and delays with the plan.



The total capacity across all schools in the area in the primary phase totalled 10,555 places, the number on role across the same group of schools was 9,461 places identifying 1,094 surplus places. We expect the net change of places to increase by a further 195 places in this area with the movement between the existing Year 6 and the incoming Reception cohort. Increasing surplus places across the sector to 1,289 places across the primary age schools.

Part 1 - Major growth areas which will require multi-school solutions.

There are no developments that fall within this category within Norwich.

Part 2 - Development locations where one new school is planned.

East Norwich (Area within the GNLP)

Allocation for up to 4000 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

The centrally located development in Norwich falls within the catchment for Lakenham Primary School and the Lionwood Infant and Junior schools and will be quite close to other surrounding schools. Lakenham is a 2FE primary all through school having capacity for 420 places and the Lionwood schools have capacity for 3FE across both school sites. Both schools have capacity within their existing buildings and continue to operate under their planned admission number.

Secondary education is provided by the Hewett Academy, CNS, and Notre Dame. CNS and Notre Dame continue to be popular across secondary cohorts and the Hewett has seen some increases in pupil numbers over the last year and could continue to have higher numbers over this sustained period.

Latest assessment of growth

The East Norwich development covers three key areas across Norwich. Covering the Carrow Works, the Deal Ground and the Utilities site on the opposite side of the river. This is a difficult development to coordinate and bring forward and currently is being overseen by the East Norwich Partnership. This is collaboration of public-



private sector groups with representatives of the County Council working in partnership to steer and deliver the masterplan for the site.

The initial site to come forward with a planning application is the Carrow Works site and this could be closely followed by the Deal Ground. We could see 2,500 dwellings from both development areas, of which a large proportion are likely to be flats.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

Primary provision is currently experiencing a demographic decline, early pressure may exist in later years groups. We anticipate this level of development to require additional capacity over time and to meet demand over a long period of time. The Hewett has a level of capacity but is part of a rebuild programme led by the DFE which will alter capacity but is expected to be available to meet demand from this project.

Sufficiency response

Children's Services Place Planning continues to be consulted on the plans for the development and is working with colleagues from the City to determine the required location of a new school which will serve this new community. The school design will need to meet an urban delivery which will be quite different from that delivered previously across Norfolk.

Working alongside colleagues we are working to assess the school delivery and understand further the needs of the development alongside the existing school capacity, which will determine the next steps of planning for this development area.

Table 25. Capital response.

East Norwich	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	2FE	Site location assessed	IRO £11.0m	2027+

Part 3 – Growth areas with implications for existing schools

There are no developments that fall within this category within Norwich.



Part 4 - Areas of the District indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Norfolk, as a rural county, is seeing some areas with considerable growth yet other areas with small and sometimes larger decline in pupil numbers. The Local Authority needs to plan effectively to ensure that provision matches the place needs. Whilst surplus places can sometimes facilitate improvement through parental preference patterns, they can also be a barrier to success. Surplus places create inefficiencies in the school system, which individual institutions may find difficult to manage. The analysis below shows the level of surplus places and indicates some of the demographic trends. Larger schools can often manage both contraction and expansion of pupil numbers. School infrastructure officers and advisers will actively monitor the quality of education provided in any area and consider any action that may be needed, which could include:

11. Agree changes to the PAN (Planned Admission Number) with associated change to accommodation.
12. Conducting an area-based review, which could lead to
 - a. Schools joining a MAT or assessing the short-term collaboration via a federation.
 - b. Changing age range for a school
 - c. Merging schools in existing or newly provided buildings.
 - d. Close schools which have significant sustainability issues in the following areas: Pupil numbers, financial viability, staffing, education outcomes.

The local authority needs to ensure we maintain sustainable schools which meet the need of the local communities. We will review the capacity in schools against their overall building capacity and consider the geographical changes that may be occurring that could influence schools in certain communities. We must be clear this could where development is happening lead to closure of schools which may not be assessed as delivering a good education to our Norfolk children.

We will continue to work with schools to identify a RAG rating that they may fall into. We will continue to work with schools to ensure they are managing their estate as efficiently and effectively as possible, in order to ensure they continue to deliver the best education for their local communities.



6. Norfolk Planning Areas have been RAG rated to identify long term excess school places across each area:
- a. Green – where there are sufficient places to match the catchment area numbers.
 - b. Amber – where there is 30+ spare places across the Planning Area but places are often filled with out of area children. These areas will be monitored but with the expectation that either catchment number increase, or housing will solve the issue.
 - c. Red – areas with considerable surplus places, limited housing, and catchment decline.

Information is based on the School Capacity Return which is sent to the Department for Education on an annual basis. The school planning areas are used to combine groups of school which have similar characteristics and operate within a similar geographical area. They may not link within the traditional catchment or feeder approach and may not strictly sit in the districts they have been included in.

Amber planning areas

Norwich North Planning Area – this area has 18 schools across the area with all phase and type being recognised. The catchment at primary demonstrates the schools have enough capacity to accommodate all pupils, but parental preference is leading to decline in take up of places, with 120 places not utilised. Schools will need to plan effectively using their planned admission number to adjust cohort sizes during this period of decline. It is not anticipated the level of development across this area will counteract the birth rate decline. The key developments across the city may take a long time before they yield any pupils.

Red planning areas

No planning areas with this category.



South Norfolk District Council

District Context

(Table 26 indicates total number and type of schools across the county)

Phase of School	All Through	Alt provision	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
South Norfolk	1	0	0	62	8	1	72
Academies			36	LA Maintained			36

Pupil Population

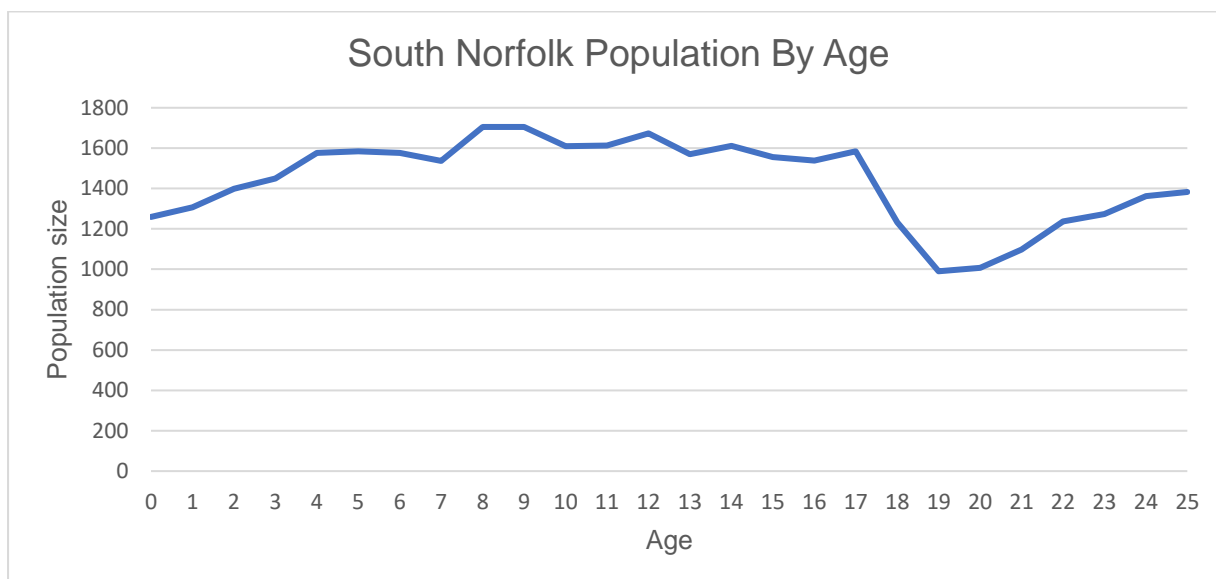
(Table 27 – Mainstream pupil population figures for South Norfolk for period 2016 to 2023)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary Places	9,694	9,999	10,284	10,426	10,629	10,929	10,909	11,027
Secondary Places	6,430	6,549	6,759	7,047	7,404	7,808	8,053	7,990
Total	16,124	16,548	17,043	17,473	18,033	18,737	18,962	19,017

(Figures taken from September census data each year. Data for 2023 has been taken from the May census count)

Numbers continue and progressively are increasing across the district. The slight change in primary numbers for 2022 appears to be related to in year adjustments. The change in secondary between 2022 and 2023 could be linked to capacity in area and movement of pupils out of area schools. The transition into secondary continues to be a pressure area for Children's Services which we plan to address in the coming academic year.

(Graph 8 Population size by Age taken from ONS census 2021 detail)



The pupil population across South Norfolk has seen quite varying changes over the generations. The low being reached for those pupils aged 19, with those children entering the reception cohort in 2002 has not been repeated. There has then been significant growth where numbers reached the high of 1,705 pupils in 2013, since then numbers have progressively been in decline.

The numbers in this chart do not show the effects of housing growth which is expected across the district. The forecast information currently plans for further reduction before numbers again begin to rise to levels experienced in 2020.

The total capacity across all schools in the area in the primary phase totalled 11,060 places, the number on role across the same group of schools was 10,976 places identifying 1,709 surplus places. We expect the net change of places to increase by a further 268 places in this area with the movement between the existing Year 6 and the incoming Reception cohort. Increasing surplus places across the sector to 1,977 places across the primary age schools.

Part 1 - Major growth areas which will require multi-school solutions.

There are no developments that fall within this category within South Norfolk.



Part 2 - Development locations where one new school is planned.

Wymondham (Area within the GNLP)

Up to 1300 new homes in various locations across the Town with planning permission and still to be built.

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

Wymondham has four primary phase schools, Browick Road, Ashleigh, Robert Kett and Wymondham Prep providing eight forms of entry between them. Early pressure seen from the extensive development in the town has been managed across all schools. In year admissions continues to be a challenge to accommodate in later year groups of the primary phase. However, there is some capacity in Key Stage 1-year groups which narrows the choice to new families moving into the area. The secondary provision is delivered by both Wymondham High and Wymondham College, and as the year groups move through into the secondary phase increased pressure is expected across most year groups.

Latest assessment of growth

Those sites that had permission before nutrient neutrality have continued at pace. Other sites will have been delayed until a solution is finalised in relation to nutrient neutrality mitigation. There are no further sites allocated across Wymondham as part of the Greater Norwich Local Plan, this is because of the period of extensive development in the area.

Children's Service Place Planning continues to assess the pupil numbers across the area and does not believe the school infrastructure can accommodate additional housing without putting excess strain on the schools both at primary and secondary.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

Pressure for places at the admissions round, reception and Year 7 for secondary are being managed well. The issue Children's Services has with pupil places is the in-year admissions which is high and with very limited options for families across the primary phase schools, children are often offered a place outside of their local area.

Sufficiency response

The impact on housing continues to cause some issues in later year groups and for in year admissions. Robert Kett does have some capacity but only in the reception cohort, and where Wymondham Prep continues to expand into later year groups it



would not be sustainable to allocate small cohorts in the older age range based on the need from in year changes.

Children's Services has taken transfer of the land for the new Silfield 2FE primary school and has consulted on the procedure to open. The presumption process has identified a trust which will run the school and work alongside the LA when delivering the build. The school is scheduled to open in September 2025, the initial PAN for the school will be 1FE, this will need to be reviewed based on the level of demand in the town.

To tackle the large numbers in the secondary sector a project has been started to look to expand Wymondham High. This will achieve up to 10FE for the school and will maximise the space available on the site. Numbers in area will be monitored and managed through the admissions process in accordance with the policy set out by the trusts involved.

Table 28. Capital response.

Wymondham	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	Silfield new primary school	2FE	Detailed design	£11.5m	2025
Future programme	Wymondham High Academy	Further phases	Final Expansion to bring to capacity of site	IRO £12m	2025

Cringleford (Area within the GNLP)

1200 homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

Cringleford village is served by one 420 place primary school, Cringleford CE VA Primary School. Secondary age children feeder catchment school is Hethersett Academy, which is operated by Inspiration Trust. Both schools remain popular within this local community and generally see's little movement to alternative schools unless through parental preference or capacity. Certainly, the High school continues to experience high volumes putting pressure on families at the admission round.

Latest assessment of growth

One of the sites south of the A11 has two developers on site which brings the housing yield forward faster, the other continues to have one developer so this will be at a slightly slower rate. This is a popular location based on its proximity to the city amenities housing will continue into 2027-28 based on current projections.



Current pressures on pupil numbers

Primary phase cohorts remain stable with pressure for places in higher year groups from when the school was asked to take a bulge year. The school is very popular and does pull some children from out of catchment, but numbers are controlled according to their PAN. Hethersett High has continued to support growth by over admitting beyond PAN for the transition into Year 7 and has committed to continue this approach while expansion comes forward. Overflow of pupils that may not get into Hethersett are able to take up a place in the Hewett which is another of the Inspiration Trust schools.

Sufficiency response

Children's Services School's Infrastructure team has begun a project on site delivering the new 2FE primary school. This will support demand across this local community and meet the needs of the continued housing in the future. The presumption process to select a new trust has concluded and the LA is collaborating with the new trust to manage the school delivery to meet its scheduled opening date of September 2024.

Discussions have taken place with local schools to manage the expectations and limit any impact of the new school on those existing settings. Continued monitoring of the pupil yield in this area will occur alongside the forecasting round and further land is available if further expansion in the primary phase may be required.

Additional land has been handed over to Hethersett Academy under the planning application for the strategic growth in Hethersett. Work is underway to agree plans for the expansion project which will fully utilise the school site and bring it up to the maximum operating capacity of 1,350 pupils.

Table 29. Capital response.

Cringleford	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary	2FE	Detailed design. Started on site.	£11.5m	2024

Long Stratton (Area within the GNLP)

1800 - 2400 new homes

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

Long Stratton primary school provision is provided by Manor Field Infant School run by Corvus Education Trust and St Mary's Junior School run by Diocese of Norwich



St Benet's MAT. The schools operate as two forms of entry but are seeing much lower numbers of intake at reception. This is due to preference in the town drawing children into the surrounding village schools. Secondary education is delivered by Long Stratton High School operated by Enrich Learning Trust, as an operating PAN of 150 places with some capacity in higher year groups.

Latest assessment of growth

This large Strategic Urban Extension for Long Stratton developing both the east and west sides of the existing A140 and includes a new bypass. Delays have occurred linked to nutrient neutrality, but the LPA planning committee approved the first planning application which brings forward the key infrastructure of the road. It will be some time before housing commences and begins to impact the local schools.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

There does not appear to be pressure on places currently with preference spreading out the number of pupils from the central location to the surrounding areas. Children's Services plan school provision in accordance with pressure on catchment numbers, the place planning in this area continues to be monitored to track any change in preference pattern which may impact the centrally located schools and the plan for the new school as the project begins to build momentum.

Sufficiency response

A site for a new 2FE primary school has been agreed to form part of a phase on the eastern development. It is expected the development will take several years before pressure on places will require the addition of a new school. When the time is right discussions will be had to determine the right approach for the school infrastructure to meet the needs of the local community and how the new building may be utilised.

Children's Services Place Planning continues to engage with stakeholder groups to plan for the development. A site assessment has been requested to understand the land specification better to plan a project and know the potential cost implications.

Table 30. Capital response.

Long Stratton	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary phase school building	2FE	Site location agreed	IRO £11.0m	2027+
Future programme	High school	Expansion of Long Stratton High to be	-	-	-



		considered longer term			
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Poringland (Area within the GNLP)

Current local provision – capacity and organisation

The village of Poringland is served by Poringland Primary School. There are other smaller primary schools surrounding the village of Poringland namely, Stoke Holy Cross, Brooke, Trowse, Alington and Rockland all of which provide primary education for children in the area. Framingham Earl High School provides secondary education. The primary school operates two forms of entry delivering 420 places and the secondary school has a PAN of 160 places, both schools have relatively confined sites.

Latest assessment of growth

Housing continues to be delivered in the village, windfall sites have come forward outside of the LP process which has caused some capacity issues across both the primary and secondary sectors. No new development is expected as part of the new Local Plan.

Current pressures on pupil numbers

The catchment for Poringland continues to operate above the PAN for the primary school which requires parents to choose other local schools and is managed as part of the admission round. In some instances, pupils have been allocated schools outside of Poringland which leads to travel implications and has supported surrounding schools which ordinarily may have not reached their admission number.

Sufficiency response

Children's Services has been unable to secure a site alongside the long-term development that has occurred across the village. Continued site assessment has been undertaken to establish a suitable location for an additional school to serve the local community.

A recent site has come forward for planning permission which offers a new primary school site as part of its masterplan, and this is currently being assessed by the district and statutory consultee's. It may offer a solution to support an additional school site to the north of the town, but it is currently too early to say.

Until a site is agreed the only option available is to manage the admission process for this area allocating the most appropriate schools accordingly to parental



preference and the policies set out by the schools in scope. We continue to be aware the primary school cannot cope with demand expected.

Framingham Earl is a popular school often accepting beyond its local community to meet preference. Its anticipated growth can be managed in the secondary sector in the foreseeable future, any additional pressure may have to utilise existing schools near to Poringland.

Table 31. capital response.

Poringland	School	Scheme	Stage	Cost/ estimate	Date if known
Future programme	New primary school	Initially 1 FE with the scope to increase to 2FE	Site search	£11.0M	2026+

Part 3 – Growth areas with implications for existing schools

Easton (Area within the GNLP)

890 homes

Area Overview

The development surrounding Easton is beginning to come forward where full planning has been received for phases 1-4.

The development includes land to extend St Peter C of E Primary Academy which is currently a one form entry school. Secondary provision is served through Ormiston Victory Academy where expansion has already occurred to meet this and other development demands.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

It is proposed we will expand the existing school to either one and half or two forms of entry when the place planning need is evident. The secondary sector has been expanded to 10FE to support meeting the need across this area.



Hethersett (Area within the GNLP)

570 homes

Area Overview

This is the last known position of remaining homes from a larger Strategic Urban Extension allocation of 1400 homes. The development is coming forward to the northern edge of the village centre. There are two developers onsite which are delivering houses at pace.

Infrastructure Growth Requirements

Children's Services previously reorganised the schools in area from a two-tier system into two all through primaries delivering 840 places across both settings. Hethersett Woodside Primary is a popular set in a new provision supporting pupils from around its local community, and Hethersett Primary is the previous junior school expanded to meet its additional demand and see children from Wymondham showing preference into the school. Further land is available as part of an existing S106 which will allow for expansion of outside space for the Hethersett Woodside site.

The secondary school admits pupils from across its catchment which has lots of housing developing including Cringleford. The school has continued to over admit supporting parental preference and expansion of the site is expected to meet continued demand, with a project being agreed to come forward over the next year to utilise the school site, which will maximise the capacity of the school.

Part 4 - Areas of the District indicating a decline in pupil numbers and where there are several small schools.

Norfolk, as a rural county, is seeing some areas with considerable growth yet other areas with small and sometimes larger decline in pupil numbers. The Local Authority needs to plan effectively to ensure that provision matches the place needs. Whilst surplus places can sometimes facilitate improvement through parental preference patterns, they can also be a barrier to success. Surplus places create inefficiencies in the school system, which individual institutions may find difficult to manage. The analysis below shows the level of surplus places and indicates some of the



demographic trends. Larger schools can often manage both contraction and expansion of pupil numbers. School infrastructure officers and advisers will actively monitor the quality of education provided in any area and consider any action that may be needed, which could include:

13. Agree changes to the PAN (Planned Admission Number) with associated change to accommodation.
14. Conducting an area-based review, which could lead to
 - a. Schools joining a MAT or assessing the short-term collaboration via a federation.
 - b. Changing age range for a school
 - c. Merging schools in existing or newly provided buildings.
 - d. Close schools which have significant sustainability issues in the following areas: Pupil numbers, financial viability, staffing, education outcomes.

The local authority needs to ensure we maintain sustainable schools which meet the need of the local communities. We will review the capacity in schools against their overall building capacity and consider the geographical changes that may be occurring that could influence schools in certain communities. We must be clear this could where development is happening lead to closure of schools which may not be assessed as delivering a good education to our Norfolk children.

We will continue to work with schools to identify a RAG rating that they may fall into. We will continue to work with schools to ensure they are managing their estate as efficiently and effectively as possible, in order to ensure they continue to deliver the best education for their local communities.

7. Norfolk Planning Areas have been RAG rated to identify long term excess school places across each area:
 - a. Green – where there are sufficient places to match the catchment area numbers.
 - b. Amber – where there is 30+ spare places across the Planning Area but places are often filled with out of area children. These areas will be monitored but with the expectation that either catchment number increase, or housing will solve the issue.



- c. Red – areas with considerable surplus places, limited housing, and catchment decline.

Information is based on the School Capacity Return which is sent to the Department for Education on an annual basis. The school planning areas are used to combine groups of school which have similar characteristics and operate within a similar geographical area. They may not link within the traditional catchment or feeder approach and may not strictly sit in the districts they have been included in.

Amber planning areas

Harleston Planning Area – a small planning area consisting of 4 schools, a 354 dwelling development has approval but not yet started and is not likely to impact the capacity within the primary phase for some time. The secondary phase is managing with numbers, it gains a consistent number across from the Diss catchment and this slightly increased in the last admission. Reduced numbers entering the primary phase will over time impact the secondary cohorts.

Loddon Planning Area – This is a large planning area consisting of 13 schools across the phases. 9 of the schools are operating a half form of entry or less, the concentration of pupils' centre around Loddon with 5 of the schools running along the border seeing some challenge with pupil movement and intake numbers. The secondary school is operating at current PAN and appears to maintain this for a period, numbers will reduce if pupil numbers do not increase via additional development expected centrally located to Loddon.

Long Stratton Planning Area – a small planning area with 6 schools, 1 infant and junior in the village centre with the surrounding schools all primary. The secondary school has stable numbers against its catchment numbers, infant and primary have 50 surplus places against catchment, with preference matching. The large-scale development will take some time before it begins to impact on the schools in the area.

Queen's Hill Costessey Planning Area – a single school planning area, the school built specifically to meet the demand of the new community it serves. The school is a 3FE primary and manages its PAN against demand, although in recent years catchment has been higher than PAN parental preference has supported sufficiency of school places. This preference pattern could lead to sustained difficulties for the school as the catchment continues to decrease over time below current PAN.

Red planning areas

Diss Planning Area – there are 12 schools in this planning area, 3 near the town centre and the remainder in outlining villages close to the border with Suffolk. 6 schools have a PAN of less than half form of entry and struggle to reach their intake number. There are some small cohorts across the schools in this area and pupil



numbers do not suggest a return to increased numbers. The schools will need to work together to manage capacity accordingly and allow planning for the future to safeguard schools in this area.

Appendix 1

The list of projects where development is planned linked to Local Plans, the projects are current safeguarded sites where Education feel there could be some impact on the existing estate and may require additional facilities. The costs associated are currently indicative based on current design guidelines and principles.

Summary of Proposed Projects

Location	District	Scheme	Cost/Estimate	Estimate Date of Delivery
Attleborough	Breckland	High School Expansion	IRO £10.0m	2025+
Attleborough	Breckland	New Primary 1	IRO £11.0m	2026+
Attleborough	Breckland	New Primary 2	IRO £11.0m	2028+
Thetford	Breckland	New Primary 1	IRO £11.0m	2026+
Thetford	Breckland	New Primary 2	IRO £11.0m	2028+
Thetford	Breckland	New Primary 3	IRO £11.0m	2030+
Thetford	Breckland	High School Expansion	Not Yet Known	2030+
Beeston Park	Broadland	New Primary 1	£11.0m	2026+
Beeston Park	Broadland	New Primary 2	£11.0m	2028+
Rackheath	Broadland	New Primary 1	£11.0m	2026+
Rackheath	Broadland	New Primary 2	£11.0m	2028+
Rackheath	Broadland	New High School	IRO £40.0m	2027+
Smee Lane North/South	Broadland	New Primary	£11.0m	2025+
South of Salhouse Road	Broadland	New Primary	£11.0m	2026+
Aylsham	Broadland	New Primary	£11.0m	2026+
Blofield	Broadland	Primary Expansion	£11.2m	2024
Hellesdon	Broadland	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2027+
Hellesdon	Broadland	High School Expansion	Not Yet Known	2030+
Taverham	Broadland	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2026+
Bradwell	Great Yarmouth	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2025



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Caister	Great Yarmouth	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2026+
West Winch	King's Lynn West Norfolk	Primary Expansion	IRO £5.0m	2026+
West Winch	King's Lynn West Norfolk	New Primary 1	IRO £11.0m	2028+
West Winch	King's Lynn West Norfolk	New Primary 2	IRO £12.0m	2030+
King's Lynn	King's Lynn West Norfolk	High School Expansion	£5.5m	2025+
Downham Market	King's Lynn West Norfolk	High School Expansion	IRO £10.0m	2024+
Fakenham	North Norfolk	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2027+
Fakenham	North Norfolk	High School Expansion	Not Yet Known	2030+
North Walsham	North Norfolk	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2028+
North Walsham	North Norfolk	High School Expansion	Not Yet Known	2030+
Holt	North Norfolk	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2026+
East Norwich	Norwich	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2027+
Silfield	South Norfolk	New Primary	£11.5m	2025
Wymondham	South Norfolk	High School Expansion	IRO £12.0m	2025
Cringleford	South Norfolk	New Primary	£11.5m	2024
Long Stratton	South Norfolk	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2027+
Poringland	South Norfolk	New Primary	IRO £11.0m	2026+
Easton	South Norfolk	Primary Expansion	IRO £6.0m	2026+
Hethersett	South Norfolk	High School Expansion	IRO £8.0m	2024

People and Communities Select Committee

Item No: 9

Report Title: Short Breaks Strategy 2023-2026

Date of Meeting: 17th November 2023

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Penny Carpenter (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

Responsible Director: James Wilson

Executive Summary

The co-produced Short Breaks Strategy (2023-26) and the proposed change in approach from an existing financial-focused *Resource Allocation System (RAS)* to a new, outcome-focused *Circle of Support System* has been written

We have completed a targeted consultation with families during the period of 27th June – 2nd August 2023. We emailed or posted the consultation to all families currently accessing short breaks, providing an online 'engagement session' on 27th July and 8 face to face sessions in libraries around the county.

There were 264 responses to the consultation, and we have listened to and acted on the compliments and concerns of families (see attached 'You Said, We Did' report).

Action Required

The Select Committee is asked to:

1. Comment on the proposals and attached reports relating to the implementation of the Circle of Support System as part of the Short Breaks Strategy (2023-26).

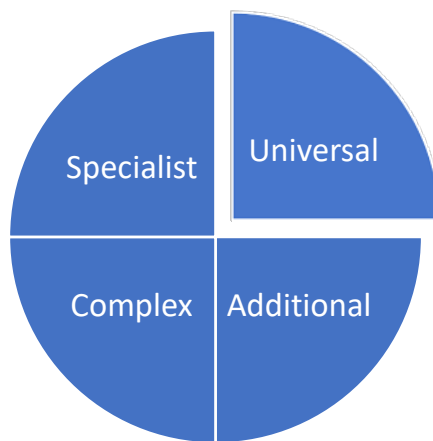
1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 Norfolk County Council have been providing Short Breaks for children and young people with disabilities for many years. The service has evolved and changed over time, adapting to the global pandemic and working hard to best support the community.

- 1.2 Short Breaks aim to improve the lives of children, young people, parents and carers and helps to prevent or reduce crisis by offering as much community based, inclusive support as possible.
- 1.3 Short Breaks can be in a child's home, in the home of an approved carer, in a community setting, or in a residential home. Depending on eligibility, needs and interests a Short Break can be for anything from a few hours (for example attending a swimming lesson), to a few days for a child or young person who may need constant care and support.
- 1.4 In Norfolk we pride ourselves of supporting children and young people to have fun experiences, establish friendships, and develop confidence, independence, and the social and emotional skills to enable them to transition to adult life successfully. The additional value Short Breaks brings to a family is that parents, carers, and siblings have time for themselves whilst knowing their child or young person is safe and having an enjoyable experience.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The draft *Short Breaks Strategy 2023-26* sets out our vision (below), mission and 10 key objectives for Short Breaks for children with SEND over the next three years:
- 2.2 Currently children and young people wanting to access the service are taken through a RAS to identify the funding available to spend on Short Breaks for the financial year. Families are awarded 'points' based on the strength of their evidence. The total number of 'points' equates to an indicative annual Short Breaks budget. The higher the 'points', the higher the indicative annual budget. Families then choose how they wish to spend their budget. However, the activities they choose do not necessarily align with the needs and outcomes of their child. This is a financial focused point system that gives a child a 'number' in relation to the level of support the evidence provided entitles them to have.
- 2.3 Our proposal is to move away from the financially focused and replace it with an inclusive, outcomes-focused Circle of Support system to support all children and young people accessing the service to have a fair and inclusive offer that best meets their needs.
- 2.4 The circle of support is broken into four quadrants:



- 2.5 Children and young people will all be supported to access the 'universal' offer and will move around the circle of support in relation to the level of need they require.

Universal: Support to access a wide range of services within the community, from after school and summer clubs, weekend activities and prepaid card for families to use on specific activities. (Universal is for all children who are accepted by the short breaks team as meeting criteria for a short break)

Additional: Community activities as well as some respite offered. Combination of activities and personal prepaid card to support with a rounded additional offer to support families.

Complexed: A variety of activities and respite offered to children and young people with complex needs. Social Care support within the package allowing for families to have access tailored activities to support the family.

Specialist: Targeted support for children and young people with specialist support and care. Social Care support within the package allowing for families to have access tailored activities to support the family.

3. Impact of the Proposal

- 3.1 Moving to the Circle of Support families/carers and children and young people will be able to access a more robust and inclusive offer that is sustainable.
- 3.2 12 case studies of families accessing Short Breaks were analysed to test the impact of the move from the RAS to the Circle of Support. The impact was positive, with:

- Earlier help and prevention support provided to children with lower level social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.
 - More inclusive universal offer to support integration into community services.
 - Families having access to a universal offer will have access to a newly appointed Inclusion Co-Ordinator to develop the inclusive practice between providers and families.
 - A mindset change moving from a financial focused system to an inclusive early help and prevention service that works within the community.
 - Short Breaks services that meet the needs/outcomes of children more effectively.
- 3.3 In addition, the formal consultation identified further impacts that families identified themselves including:
- New offer of funding towards family holidays in the UK
 - New offer to pay for activities for the whole family, or siblings, not just the child on the plan.
 - Positivity around the general move towards the offer being outcomes focused.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1 Having a financially focused system creates dependency on financial support and not on giving the best outcomes for children and young people accessing the service.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 Keeping with the current RAS system, however this does not allow us to work with families in a child-centred way focusing on improving outcomes and supporting them towards leading their most independent lives.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Short Breaks service is a demand led service and the Strategy and move to Circle of Support will not put additional pressure on the budget.
- 6.2 Families will not receive less Short Breaks funding. The level of Short Breaks a child/family will receive under the new Circle of Support will remain the same as under the RAS, but some of this could be delivered in a different way to better meet the child's needs. Aligning a child's needs/outcomes with the Short Breaks they receive should result in

needs/outcomes being met more effectively.

- 6.3 Through commissioning more inclusive support in the community and providing families with more flexibility and choice we should be able to provide better value for money for families accessing services at this level and prevent escalation of need to high cost specialist packages of support.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 Staff: None

7.2 Property: None

7.3 IT: None

8. Other Implications

8.1 Legal Implications: None

8.2 Human Rights Implications: None

8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included): Yes

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): None

8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate): None

8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate): None

8.7 Any Other Implications: N/A

9. Risk Implications / Assessment

- 9.1 Norfolk County Council was not required legally to consult on the proposed change. However, given that Short Breaks has been subject to public scrutiny over the years, legal advice was a formal consultation to give

families the opportunity to feedback and shape the proposal. The risk was that it could be perceived as an attempt to cut provision or funds for families receiving short breaks, which is not the case.

- 9.2 The consultation has highlighted that this was the perception of some families and we have made changes to the strategy to make our proposals clearer and address the concerns of families. We have also put together a 'You Said, We Did' report that will be shared with all families accessing short breaks.

10. Recommendations

1. To proceed with the implementation of the Short Breaks Strategy and changes from the RAS to Circle of Support. We will ensure clear communications with families feeding back the findings of the consultation and the launch of the new strategy and approach.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 Short Breaks Strategy 2023-26.
11.2 Consultation analysis report
11.3 'You said we did' report.

Officer Contact

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If you need this report in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.



Norfolk County Council Short Breaks Strategy 2023-2026





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1 Introduction

This strategy sets out the plan to improve the commissioning approach to Short Breaks over the next three years, supporting our wider strategic ambitions that are found within:

- [Flourish](#)
- [Special Educational Needs Sufficiency Strategy 2019](#)
- [Norfolk Area Special Educational Needs and/or Disability \(SEND\) Strategy 2019-2024](#)

The Short Breaks Strategy will be implemented over the three-year period, allowing for reflection, co-production, and collaboration. Yearly reviews of the strategy will allow for an evidenced based approach and proactive learning to take place.

2 What are Short Breaks?

2.1 The background and our duty

[The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#) sets out how local authorities must provide Short Breaks and what they should provide. They come in different shapes and sizes ranging from inclusive local provision activities in the community that are available to everyone, to more specialist activities with trained staff and specialist equipment. They can be delivered in families' homes, at centres, or out in the community. Children and young people can take part in new activities, make friends, learn new skills, become more independent and have fun. Children and young people can take part in new activities, make friends, learn new skills, become more independent and have fun.

Current access to Short Breaks should be available to any child or young person who is between 5-17 years of age, who has identified special educational needs and/or a disability; and who lives in Norfolk. Within the second year of the strategy (2023/24), we plan to widen the breath of our offer from birth to 17 years of age, to allow for a fully inclusive and robust offer (see our three-year road map for details).

The following legislation is also in place to protect and support children, young people, and their families:

- The Children & Young Person's Act 2008
- The Short Break Regulations 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- SEND Reforms 2014
- Children's & Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970



2.2 Why have a commissioning strategy?

Norfolk is working towards four key priorities for children and young people with SEND, articulated through the Norfolk Area SEND Strategy.

Norfolk County Council has been providing Short Breaks for children, young people, and their families for many years. The service has evolved and changed over the years, adapting to the global pandemic, and working hard to support the community.

Whilst our offer is good, we are always seeking to improve our service. The demand on Short Breaks services is growing and we work closely with partners to listen, learn, and develop our offer. Reviewing allows us to be proactive, inclusive and grow our offer to support children, young people, and their families.

Feedback from our partners, colleagues and most importantly the children, young people and their families demonstrates: *the key to an outstanding service is to provide the right opportunities, at the right time, in the right place for the right groups and individuals.*

This Short Breaks Strategy sets out our vision, mission and 10 big key objectives that will be the driving force to improving our service. We are passionate and committed to providing an excellent service that is outcomes-focused, evidence-led and allows children and young people with SEND in Norfolk to Flourish.

2.3 The benefits of Short Breaks

In Norfolk, Short Breaks offer a range of services which give children and young people with SEND positive experiences that support their personal development, whilst, at the same time, giving their parent/carers a break.

Short Breaks can be provided in the family home, in the home of an approved carer, in a community setting, or in a residential home. Depending on eligibility, needs and interests, a Short Break can last from a few hours to a few days.

In Norfolk we want to support children and young people to have fun experiences, establish friendships, and develop confidence, independence, and the social and emotional skills to enable them to transition to adult life. Short Breaks enable parent/carers and siblings to have much needed time away, whilst knowing their child or young person is safe and having an enjoyable experience.

2.4 The current offer

Norfolk spends approximately **£3.5 million** per year on its extensive Short Breaks offer.

Full details of these current offers can be found on the [Short Breaks webpage](#). The Short Breaks offer stretches across the range of needs to deliver outcomes and improve the lives



of children, young people, and their parent/carers, and aims to prevent or reduce crisis by offering as much community-based inclusive support as possible.

Within our Local Offer we have a dedicated team that works with community groups and schools to encourage a more inclusive approach in supporting families who wish to access local clubs and activities.

3 Our Demographics

Meeting the needs of the Norfolk community is a key priority of our commissioning strategy. Our Short Breaks offer is informed by our understanding of the number of children and young people with SEND, where they live and their individual needs.

To know what services we need to provide, we first need to understand the children and young people who are using the service. Using this information, we can apply an evidenced-based approach to commissioning services that better meet the needs of our community, allowing us to understand how our service needs to change over time.

In December 2022, 1,700 children and young people accessed Short Breaks. Out of this total, Social and Emotional Mental Health Needs (SEMH) was the highest primary need. This need is reflected among the growing number of children and young people who have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) in Norfolk. In June 2022, 8,751 children and young people had an identified primary need of Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) (27.3%), closely followed by Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (27.1%). Out of approximately 123,233 school aged children in Norfolk in 2020, 13.1% accessed Special Educational Need (SEN) support and 3.8% had an EHCP.

The number of young people aged 0-25 with EHCPs (Education, Health, and Care Plans) in Norfolk has increased by around 21% (from 6,689 to c8,500) between 2020 and our current estimate, which is similar to the national increase.

Compared to national figures, in 2020 (our most recent data) Norfolk's young people with EHCPs or SEN Support:

- are less likely to be in mainstream education settings (35.4% compared to 43% nationally)
- are more likely to be awaiting provision (0.9% v. 0.4%) - are more likely to be educated at home (1.3% v 0.8%) - are less likely to be in a special school (31.1% v. 41%) - are more likely to be in alternative provision (2.5% v. 0.9%)

The number of children and young people with disabilities accessing Short Breaks is increasing nationally and locally. This is why our service needs to respond in a proactive way to support families, prevent the escalation of need, and reduce the risk of families reaching breaking point.



3.1 Listening to children, young people, and their families

As a part of our ongoing commitment to listen to our community, we ask children, young people, parents and carers and wider service users to feedback to us regarding their experiences.

Over a thousand different families access our Short Breaks service. Through engagement events we continuously monitor and listen to their feedback. Here are some of the key messages that we have received.

Support to services to be more inclusive to:

- Enable children and young people to have a break without their parent/carers.
- Offer more services across various locations.
- Encourage mainstream schools to be more inclusive and provide support to do this.
- Provide a more flexible service.
- Provide more support to fill in forms and simplify forms.
- Improve the way we communicate about the services on offer.
- Support with improved access to services, including support with travel.

“Safe space for young people to meet up without being judged.”

“I want professionals to take us seriously and listen to our views.”

“More options for activities in North Norfolk. There's a gap between starting school and then being able to attend youth groups - more extra-curricular activities.”

“It's wonderful that my son has his own time supported by his two PAs. It also gives the family some respite. Thank you.”

“More employment and volunteering opportunities.”

“Thank you so much! This will help our daughter to develop her social skills, balance, coordination, and help me give her more enjoyable ways to help.”



Key areas of change requested includes:

- Increase the number and types of activities on offer.
- Improve the way we communicate and share information about our service and the activities on offer.
- Gradually extend the service to include children aged 0 to 5 with complex needs.
- Improve support for young people to transition to adult life, including further education, work, independent living etc.
- Provide a more inclusive offer.
- Parent/carers want the opportunity to be able to go on Short Breaks as a whole family.
- More learning visual aids for parents and carers supporting how to access Short Breaks.
- Opportunities for children and young people to develop their employability skills.

4 Delivering our Short Breaks strategy

4.1 Commissioning principles

Our Short Breaks strategy is aligned with Norfolk County Council's core commissioning principles. These are:

- Outcomes focused
- Leading an inclusive offer
- Early help intervention and prevention
- Safe and secure service
- Equality and diversity
- Working with key partners
- Co-production
- Embedding social value within our services
- Financially sustainable now and in the future

4.2 Outcomes focused

The Norfolk Children and Young People Partnership Strategy *Flourishing in Norfolk 2021-2025* sets out a shared ambition for children and young people to Flourish by achieving the following overarching outcomes:



Family and friends	Children and young people are safe, connected and supported through positive relationships and networks.
Learning	Children and young people are achieving their full potential and developing skills which prepare them for life.
Opportunity	Children and young people develop as well-rounded individuals through access to a wide range of opportunities which nurture their interests and talents.
Understood	Children and young people feel listened to, understood and part of decision-making processes.
Resilience	Children and young people have the confidence and skills to make their own decisions and take on life's challenges.
Individual	Children and young people are respected as individuals, confident in their own identity and appreciate and value their own and others' uniqueness.
Safe and secure	Children and young people are supported to understand the risk and make safe decisions by the actions that adults and children and young people themselves take to keep them safe and secure.
Healthy	Children and young people have the support, knowledge, and opportunity to lead their happiest and healthiest lives.

Outcomes for parent/carers:

- receive a break confident that their child is safe and having fun, whilst having their individual needs met.
- have improved wellbeing.
- are supported to continue to care or to do so more effectively.
- have some 'me time' – this can mean different things to different families, including resting and recharging, spending time with siblings and family members, following their own hobbies and interests, undertaking everyday household tasks.
- are assured that their child is being supported to experience various places and activities and develop relationships outside of their family.
- are assured that their child is experiencing things they cannot experience at home.
- see their child Flourish.

Our vision for Short Breaks...



Providing opportunities for breaks where children and young people with disabilities can thrive, grow, achieve and have fun in the community with their peers, whilst supporting their families to have a break from caring.

Our mission for Short Breaks...

Delivering an inclusive offer of community-based activities and respite breaks to children and young people with disabilities in Norfolk. Supporting them to have fun whilst providing a break from caring for their families.

4.3 10 Big Objectives

For us to deliver an outstanding service we have developed our 10 big objectives that we are committed to achieving:

Objective 1: Parent/carers, children and young people have the opportunity to access and choose more inclusive local provision across Norfolk, such as after school clubs, holiday clubs.

What is this objective about?

Through our engagement with partners, including families, it is clear that more inclusive local provision is needed. We have designed an inclusive element of our Short Breaks service that is working towards being accessible and inclusive for all.

How will we achieve this?

- Supporting mainstream schools and clubs to improve facilities to allow them to be accessible and inclusive.
- Introduction of a key role within the Norfolk County Council Childrens Services Commissioning team that will support the more inclusive local provision approach working with providers, mainstream schools, and wider stakeholders. Link the offer together, listening carefully to feedback and responding in a proactive manner.
- Engaging with providers of services to identify how their provision can be made more accessible for children and young people with disabilities.
- Providing more funds to support the development of existing providers within the local offer.
- Linking wider services such as Holiday Activity Fund, to providers allowing for support for all families.



Objectives 2: Parent/carers, children and young people can access a community Short Breaks clubs and activities offer, making friends and having their needs met enabling good outcomes.

What is this objective about?

In Norfolk there is a wide range of providers and opportunities for children and young people to access Short Breaks. As Norfolk is an exceptionally large rural county accessing some services is a challenge for some families due to the location of some services.

How will we achieve this?

- Addressing the unmet need in our rural communities through a range of creative commissioning.
- Developing new services and expanding existing services in rural communities.
- Listening to our parents/carers and young people accessing Short Breaks, allowing for an evidenced based approach to developing new and sustainable offers across the county.

Objective 3: Parent/carers can have a break in the knowledge that their child(ren) is safe and well-cared for by trained staff.

What is this objective about?

Keeping children and young people safe and well cared for by qualified trained staff is a key priority and commitment of Norfolk County Council. Listening to parents and carers we know that it is important for families to have the confidence and reassurance that their child or young person is having fun but is also secure and safe throughout.

How will we achieve this?

- Robust, consistent quality assurance.
- Clearer pathways for access to training for all settings.
- High quality training working with partners to deliver a child centred approach.

Objective 4: Providing community Short Breaks and respite for families at the right point in time, reducing escalation of need and reducing chances of families reaching crisis.

What is this objective about?

Short Breaks are vital in supporting families at the right time, when they are needed, in the right way. They are fun and engaging whilst also supporting de-escalation of pressure points.

How will we achieve this?



- Supporting families with the right service at the right time.
- Develop a new tool that assesses the individual needs of children & young people that is focused upon outcomes. (See Appendix A for the Short Breaks Complete Circle of Support)
- Being open and honest at all times.
- Signposting and linking families to wider services.
- Listening and responding to feedback.
- Always working on an evidenced based approach.
- Effective communication and links with partners and wider services.
- Commissioning more providers to meet identified needs.

Objective 5: Children and young people with disabilities are supported to become more independent, achieving positive outcomes moving into adult life, but recognising this will mean something different for every young person.

What is this objective about?

Outcomes are the changes we expect to see because of our Short Breaks Strategy. Our Short Breaks services currently support children from 5 to 17 years (up to their 18th birthday). It is crucial that the service supports children and young people to become more independent allowing for a positive transition into adult life.

How will we achieve this?

- Ensuring that our Short Breaks offer supports the development of life skills to prepare young people for adult life.
- Signposting families to a range of options that include further education, employment, and training to ensure a smooth transition.
- Improving information and support for parents and carers going through this transition with their young person. Listening to feedback and learning, making amends to our offer as needed.

Objective 6: Parent/carers, children and young people are communicated with effectively and feel involved in the application and review process.

What is this objective about?

Communication is crucial in the success of an outstanding service. Long unnecessary application forms can cause unnecessary stress and anxiety. As a service we are moving away from this to a simpler smarter system.

How will we achieve this?



- We are working hard to make key changes to our application and review process introducing a NEW online Parent carer portal.
- Development of a two-pathway application system avoiding long and unnecessary questions when some parts don't apply to everyone.
- Development of a traffic light review system allowing for quick changes to care plans.
- Development of key communication and support published at each stage to allow parents and carers to quickly seek help when needed.

Objective 7: Giving opportunities and support to access Personal Assistants or pre-paid cards through a Direct Payment scheme.

What is this objective about?

For some parent/carers the support of a Personal Assistant is vital in providing a much-needed Short Break. These will be accessible through our Direct Payment Scheme.

How will we achieve this?

- Clear communication and information given at point of application.
- Support through the process with a dedicated team.
- Families will be offered a direct payment / personal budget.

Objective 8: Families in need of more complex or specialist respite are supported to access provision that meets their needs, which may include overnight respite.

What is this objective about?

Families who are assessed by a specialist Children with Disabilities Social Worker as requiring complex or specialist provision such as overnight respite and Domiciliary Care (personal care).

How will we achieve this?

- Ensure high quality service and support is available for those children with the most complex needs.
- Seek to ensure a range of high-quality provision that allows families to have a choice of support and overnight respite that caters for their child or young persons' needs.
- Reviewing the demand for our service with a vision to meet the requirements of all our families.

Objective 9: Supporting families and siblings to enjoy activities that are fun and inclusive, providing a break for all.



What is this objective about?

Short Breaks are not only for the child or young person but for the whole family to enjoy. This may come in the form of allowing parents and carers a break away from their day-to-day caring responsibilities and or time with other children. It is an ambition to have a service that not only supports children and young people with disabilities but also siblings, allowing for a full family support package.

How will we achieve this?

- Introducing opportunities where siblings can attend specific events to enjoy activities that are fun and inclusive.
- Support the whole family to access the Short Break together e.g., UK (United Kingdom) family holidays, days out, weekends away.
- Actively seeking more activities in the community which is supported by our SBIC.
- Group activities with qualified and/or experienced staff that allows parents to have a break.

Objective 10: Creating opportunities for all children and young people with a disability to Flourish in Norfolk.

What is this objective about?

The Norfolk Children and Young People Strategic Partnership's Strategy [Flourishing in Norfolk](#) 2021-2025 sets out a shared ambition for children and young people to Flourish by achieving the following overarching outcomes (see p7/8).

How will we achieve this?

We will make sure that the outcomes for children and young people accessing our service promote Flourish outcomes:

- **Family** and friends
- Access to **learning**
- The **opportunity** to lead a good life
- Being **understood**
- Building **resilience**
- Respect for their **individuality**
- Feeling **safe**
- Being **healthy**

4.4 Key partners

Our Norfolk Short Breaks strategy cannot improve the experiences of children, young people and families who access our Short Break offer without working in partnership with a



range of other agencies. To design this strategy, we have worked with key partners to develop a service that is responsive and coproduced. To implement this strategy, we will engage with these partners to encourage them to work alongside us and consider what more they could do to bring about improved outcomes. Key partners we will engage with are:

- Parents and carers
- Children and young people
- Health
- Education
- Social Care
- Providers of short breaks services
- Community services

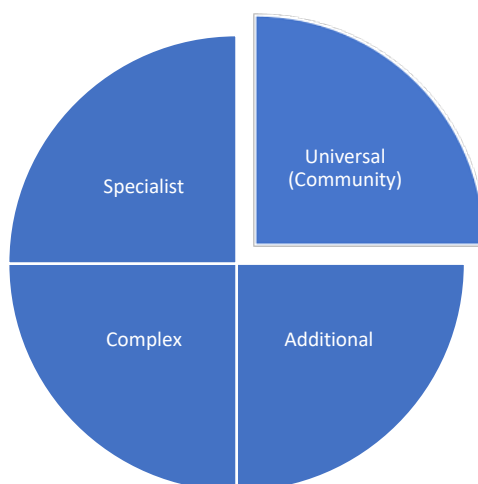
4.5 Measuring impact and continuous improvement

Evidencing impact and continuously improving our Short Breaks service is crucial. We will use a range of data to measure whether the changes delivered by this Strategy are effective and impactful. We will know that we are seeing successful impacts when:

- Children and young people with disabilities are accessing appropriate community-based provisions as part of our Early Help offer. This will be evidenced through increased attendance of children accessing Short Breaks within the community. Short Breaks is aligned with other Norfolk County Council commissioned services that provides a holistic and inclusive offer of support.
- Parent/carers, and their children feedback confidence in the quality of our Short Breaks offer.
- Community providers feel supported in becoming more inclusive across the county.
- The offer is clear to services, practitioners, and families alike. Families report that they understand what the offer means for them.
- Individual outcomes for children and young people and families are delivered and progress is measured at their review.



Appendix A - Short Breaks Complete Circle of Support



Universal

Support to access a wide range of services within the community, from after school and summer clubs, weekend activities and prepaid card for families to use on specific activities.



Additional

Community activities as well as some respite offered. Combination of activities and personal prepaid card to support with a rounded additional offer to support families.



Complex

A variety of activities and respite offered to children and young people with complex needs. Social Care support within the package allowing for families to have access to tailored activities to support the family.



Specialist

Targeted support for children and young people with specialist support and care. Social Care support within the package allowing for families to have access to tailored activities to support the family.

This approach is used in other local authorities. The premise behind it is ensuring that the right level of support is identified for a child and their family. We conducted 12 cases studies of children currently receiving short breaks to look at the impact of moving to the



circle of support could potentially have. In summary the circle of support had a more beneficial impact, which included:

- **Access to Short Breaks Inclusion Coordinator supporting providers to deliver a more inclusive offer.**
- **Wider choice of community-based provision.**
- **Clear evidence of outcomes being met.**
- More personalised activities
- Either the same or an increased budget of support

This new approach will have a phased introduction which will start in April 2024, for all new referrals into the short breaks' portal. All children currently getting short breaks will move across to the new model as and when their review is required.



Short Breaks consultation

Summary of feedback

October 2023

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took the time to respond to our consultation on the Draft Strategy for Short Breaks.

Whether you completed the consultation online, by post, attended one of our 8 drop-in library events, or at our online event – **thank you**.

The consultation ran for five weeks from 27 June to the 2 August and focused on families who already receive Short Breaks or may receive them in the future.

The consultation was sent to **1,684 families** and promoted to the wider SEND community.

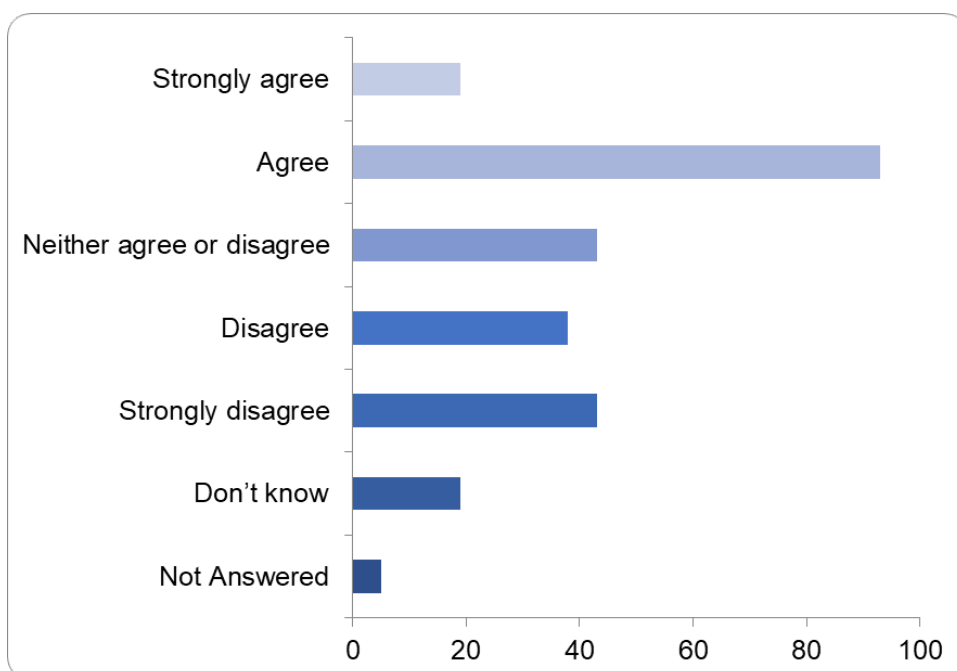
We received **264 responses**, which is a response rate of **16%**.

Your feedback is important to us, and we have used it to review our Draft Strategy.

This document summarises the main feedback and aims to address the main concerns raised.

Summary of feedback

43% of families **strongly agreed or agreed** with our proposal to change the way families' needs are assessed, compared to **31%** who **strongly disagreed or disagreed**.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	19	7.31%
Agree	93	35.77%
Neither agree or disagree	43	16.54%
Disagree	38	14.62%
Strongly disagree	43	16.54%
Don't know	19	7.31%
Prefer not to say	0	0.00%
Not Answered	5	1.92%

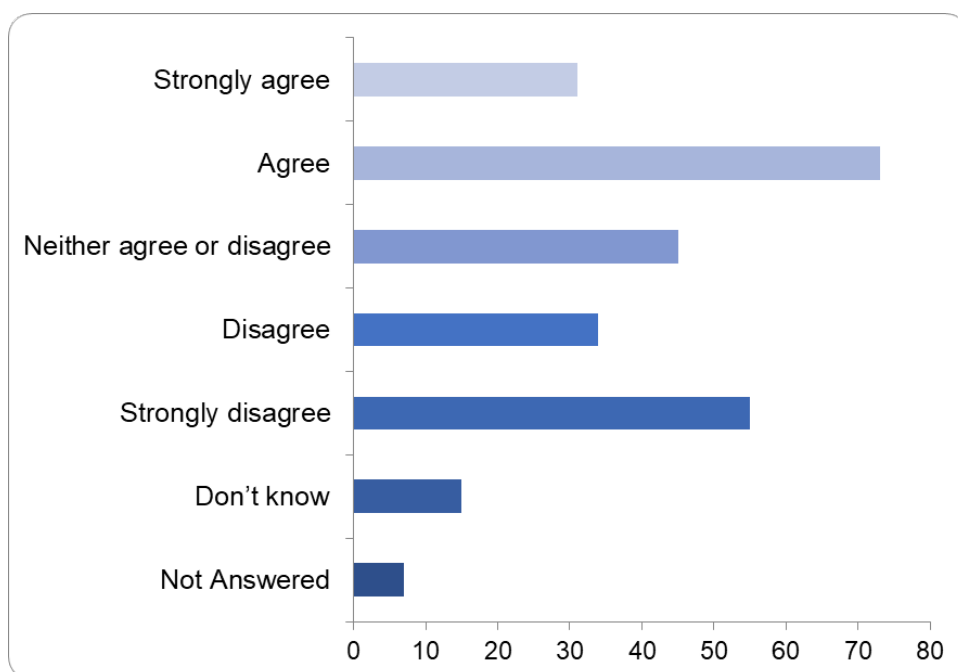
We asked families how our proposal to change the way families' needs are assessed might affect them. This included delivering their Short Breaks package in a different way, resulting in some direct payments potentially increasing, remaining the same, or decreasing due to some services being paid for directly by the County Council.

The **top themes** are below. Where a theme was a concern, we have included our response in the box on the right-hand side. We hope you find our responses helpful.

Theme	Our response
<p>Some families had concerns about moving to group settings which may not suit some children and could have a negative impact.</p> <p>Other families told us moving to a community setting would have a positive impact, giving them choice and flexibility around their Short Breaks.</p> <p>Respondents were uncertain about the proposed changes and how they would work in practice.</p>	<p>We want to provide more Short Breaks in the community (including group activities) where this is appropriate to meet the child's needs and outcomes. This will give families more choice and provide activities in a more cost-effective way.</p> <p>We want to reassure families that group activities will not be compulsory. Families will still be able to choose which Short Breaks they take part in, based on their child's needs and outcomes. We recognise that every child and young person is different and group activities may not be suitable for everyone.</p> <p>We understand families' concerns around uncertainty and will clearly communicate with families how it will work in practice.</p> <p>We plan to phase in the new approach when families set up a new Short Breaks Plan or renew their existing Plan.</p> <p>We will communicate with each family on an individual basis to ensure they understand the new approach, but want to reassure</p>

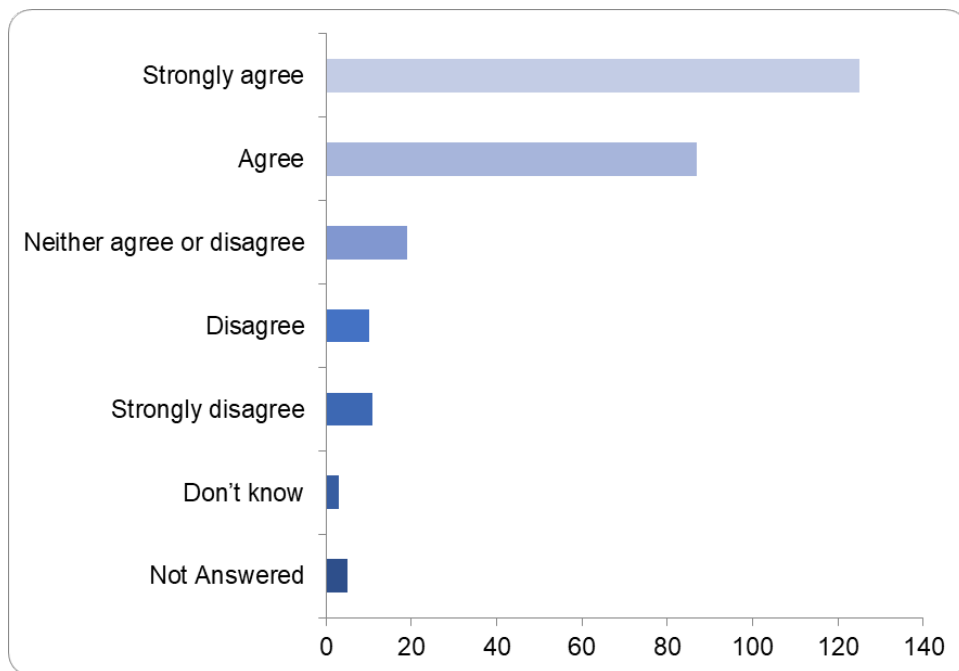
families that they will still be involved in designing their child's Short Breaks package and will still have a choice around the type of Short Breaks they receive.

40% of families **strongly agreed or agreed** with our proposal to include an increased amount of inclusive, low cost or free community-based activities closer to home. **34%** of families **strongly disagreed or disagreed**.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	31	11.92%
Agree	73	28.08%
Neither agree or disagree	45	17.31%
Disagree	34	13.08%
Strongly disagree	55	21.15%
Don't know	15	5.77%
Prefer not to say	0	0.00%
Not Answered	7	2.69%

A **majority of 82%** of families **strongly agreed or agreed** with our proposal to give people the choice to use their funding to pay for other family members to attend activities alongside their child with SEND. Only **8%** of families **strongly disagreed or disagreed**.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	125	48.08%
Agree	87	33.46%
Neither agree or disagree	19	7.31%
Disagree	10	3.85%
Strongly disagree	11	4.23%
Don't know	3	1.15%
Prefer not to say	0	0.00%
Not Answered	5	1.92%

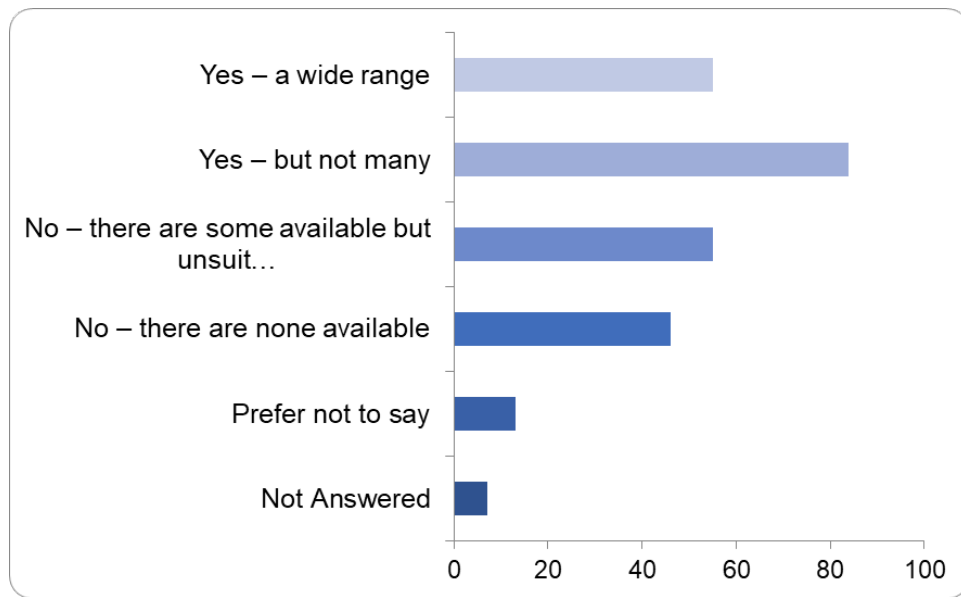
We asked families how, if at all, our proposal to give people the choice to use their funding to pay for other family members to attend activities might affect them.

The **top themes** are below. Where a theme was a concern, we have included our response in the box on the right-hand side. We hope you find our responses helpful.

Theme	Our response
<p>Some families were concerned that the proposal to allow families to use their short breaks funding to pay for other family members to join activities would limit their funding or choice of/access to activities.</p> <p>Some families had the view that funding should only be used for the child named in the Short Breaks Plan.</p> <p>However, others noted proposals could have a positive impact. Some respondents gave examples of opportunities for more family time with parents and other siblings being able to spend more time doing activities together as a family.</p>	<p>We want to reassure families that using Short Breaks funding to pay for other household members to attend activities is not compulsory.</p> <p>We recognise that every family is different. This change is an extension of our current offer with the aim to providing families with more choice and flexibility.</p>
Families asked how we could support services to be more	By 'inclusive' we mean aiming to provide equal access to opportunities and resources for

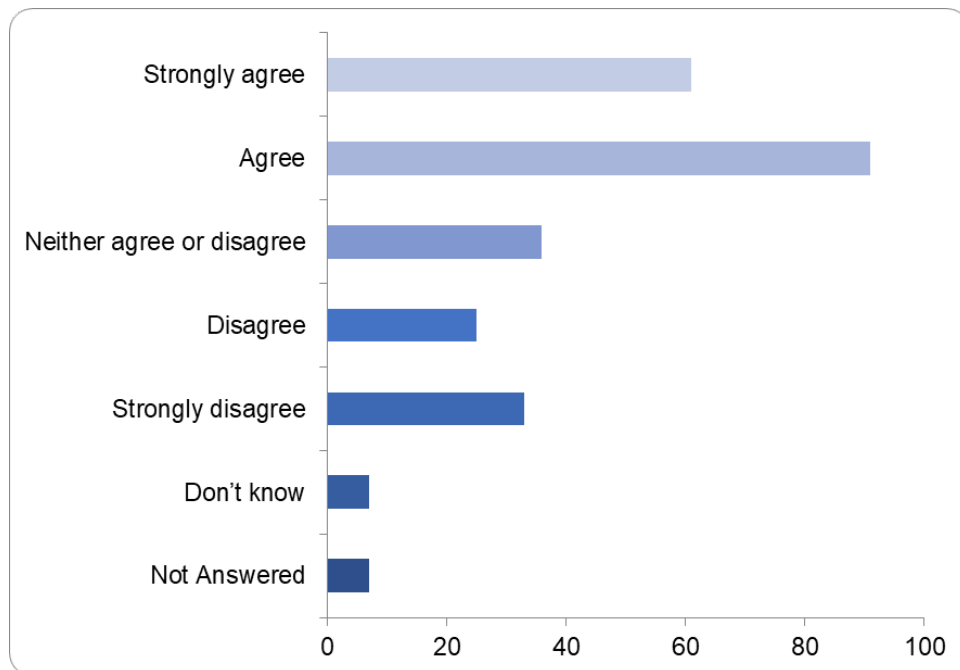
<p>inclusive and how we would define inclusive.</p>	<p>children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>Our two Inclusion Coordinators will continue to work with local community organisations to advise and support them to be more inclusive.</p>
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Half of families (53%) had activities in a location close/convenient to their home currently, compared to **39%** who **did not**.



Option	Total	Percent
Yes – a wide range	55	21.15%
Yes – but not many	84	32.31%
No – there are some available but unsuitable for my child	55	21.15%
No – there are none available	46	17.69%
Prefer not to say	13	5.00%
Not Answered	7	2.69%

58% of families **strongly agreed or agreed** with our proposal to offer increased support to community activity providers, so that they can be inclusive and children with SEND can attend. **22%** of families **strongly disagreed or disagreed**.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	61	23.46%
Agree	91	35.00%
Neither agree or disagree	36	13.85%
Disagree	25	9.62%
Strongly disagree	33	12.69%
Don't know	7	2.69%
Prefer not to say	0	0.00%
Not Answered	7	2.69%

We asked families how, if at all, our proposal to offer increased support to community activity providers might affect them.

The **top themes** are below. Where a theme was a concern, we have included our response in the box on the right-hand side. We hope you find our responses helpful.

Theme	Our response
Families had concerns about whether general providers were trained adequately or had enough facilities to care for children and young people with SEND.	<p>We monitor the Short Breaks providers that we contract with, which includes staff training, policies, procedures, and safeguarding.</p> <p>We do not monitor general providers in the community who we do not have a contract with. Parents are advised to check safeguarding aspects themselves as they would for any other activity in the community that a child might attend.</p> <p>Our Inclusion Coordinators will continue to work with general providers in the community to advise and support them to take a more inclusive approach.</p>
Families told us about positive and negative impacts of community groups.	
Families told us they were uncertain about our proposals.	We understand this and will make sure that we clearly communicate with families how it will work in practice when they either set-up a new Short Breaks Plan or renew their existing Plan.



Norfolk County Council

Short Breaks Strategy 2023-2026

Equality Impact Assessment – Findings and Recommendations

November 2023

Colleen Hubbard

Equality impact assessments enable decision-makers to consider the impact of proposals on people with protected characteristics.

You can update an assessment at any time to inform service planning and commissioning. For help or information please contact equalities@norfolk.gov.uk

1. The proposal Short Breaks Strategy 2023-2026

1.1 The proposal is to implement a new strategy for the delivery of Short Breaks within Norfolk during the period April 2023 to March 2026. The changes are designed to improve outcomes for children and young people by providing more inclusive community services. The goal is to grow the current market with more inclusive services as well as making existing services more inclusive. Changes include:

- Introducing a new accessible online portal system for parents and carers to apply for their Short Breaks funding online, with a paper version for those without internet access. Families who apply online will not be prioritised over families who apply on paper.
- The way in which Short Breaks support is identified moving from the existing Resource Allocation System to a new Circle of Support.
- How families can use their Short Breaks funding.
- A change to the age-range of who may access Short Breaks (currently from age 5-18 years moving to 0-18 years).
- Support for transition to adult life services, typically from 16 years upwards.

2. Legal context

2.1 Public authorities are required by the Equality Act 2010 to give due regard to equality when exercising public functions¹. This is called the 'Public Sector Equality Duty'.

2.2 The purpose of an equality impact assessment is to consider the potential impact of a proposed change or issue on people with protected characteristics (see Annex 1 for information about the different protected characteristics).

2.3 If the assessment identifies any detrimental impact, this enables mitigating actions to be developed.

2.4 It is not always possible to adopt the course of action that will best promote the interests of people with protected characteristics. However, equality assessments enable informed decisions to be made that take every opportunity to minimise disadvantage.

3. Information about the people affected by the proposal

3.1 This proposal will primarily impact on children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families supported by the Short Breaks Service in Norfolk. In 2022 this equated to approximately 1,700 children and young people aged 5-18 years and their families.

3.2 This includes people with a range of protected characteristics, in relation to disability, sex, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, age and sexual orientation.

3.3 NCC staff (approx. 6) working within the Short Breaks team will be affected by the new strategy because it will mean changes to the way applications are received (through a portal), a change in how provision is determined and amendments to other administrative procedures.

- 3.4 Some staff in existing community provision may be affected by the opportunity to receive additional training to enable them to provide a suitable service for children using their Short Breaks.
- 3.5 Some businesses may be affected by the opportunity to broaden the range of activities that they offer, to a wider group of children and young people, which may come with some financial support to enable them to do so.

4. Potential impact

- 4.1 Based on the evidence available, this proposal is likely to have a positive impact on a particular group of people with protected characteristics (those with disabilities and due to age).
- 4.2 This is because the availability of inclusive group-based community provision will be increased in local communities. A dedicated role of an Inclusion Co-ordinator will work with providers to ensure that more children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) can access Short Breaks alongside their peers within community settings.
- 4.3 **Age** - The new strategy will continue to ensure that Short Breaks are available to children and young people with SEND from aged 5 years to 18 years. It will impact under 5's positively because from the second year of the strategy, the age at which applications can be made will begin to reduce.
 - 4.3.1 Young people aged 16 and 17 are likely to need and want to undertake activities that support their transition into adult life. The strategy will encourage providers to take this into consideration when supporting young people and their families through the service and a transition programme will be developed by the Short Breaks service.
- 4.4 **Disability** –There may be some children and young people who have exceptional/very complex needs who will not be able to attend the new community provision initially because staff will be required to attend training specific to an individual's disability or training that will be needed to support a number of children and young people.
 - 4.4.1 Full assessments of premises will be required to ascertain which parts are not fully accessible and to determine whether there are steps that can be taken to make the premises fully accessible for a child or young person.
 - 4.4.2 Parents may have learning disabilities themselves and may need assistance with Short Breaks applications. This should be identified by the Short Breaks Team and support provided where necessary.
 - 4.4.3 The new, more inclusive approach to Short Breaks needs to ensure that children/young people's individual support needs are considered when accessing Short Breaks, especially universal services in the community. For example, group-based activities in large community buildings with loud acoustics and bright lighting may not be suitable for some children and young people.

- 4.5 **Sex** – The service should have the same impact on children and young people and their parent carers regardless of their sex. It will be important to ensure that activities are available to boys and girls.
- 4.6 **Pregnancy and maternity** – the changes may affect parent carers who are pregnant or new mothers positively because they are more likely to be supported to have a break and have improved access services in their local community, reducing their travel time.
- 4.7 **Race** – the service should have the same impact on children and young people and their parent carers regardless of their race or ethnic group.
- 4.8 **Language** - providers may be required to provide information about the service in different languages and in different formats to meet individual needs e.g., where English is not their first language, braille.
- 4.9 **Sexual Orientation** - the service should have the same impact on children, young people and their parent carers regardless of their sexual orientation.
- 4.10 **Religion and Belief** - the service should have the same impact on children, young people, and parent carers regardless of their religion or beliefs. If a child or young person has specific needs relating to their religion or beliefs that need to be considered when accessing a service, then the provider will need to identify and meet them where possible.
- 4.11 **Marriage and civil partnership** - the service should have the same impact on children and young people and their parent carers regardless of their relationship status.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 There is no legal impediment to going ahead with the proposal. It would be implemented in full accordance with due process, national guidance and policy. Similar proposals have been implemented elsewhere in the UK.
- 5.2 It is possible to conclude that the proposal may have a positive impact on some people with protected characteristics, for the reasons set out in this assessment. It may also have some detrimental impacts, also set out in the assessment.
- 5.3 Decision-makers are therefore advised to take these impacts into account when deciding whether or not the proposal should go ahead, in addition to the mitigating actions recommended below.
- 5.4 Some of the actions will address the potential detrimental impacts identified in this assessment, but it is not possible to address all the potential impacts. Ultimately, the task for decision-makers is to balance these impacts alongside the need to manage reduced resources and continue to target support at those who need it most.

6. Recommended actions

If your assessment has identified any detrimental impacts, set out here any actions that will help to mitigate them.

Number	Action	Lead	Date
1.			
2.			
3.			

7. Evidence used to inform this assessment

Reference any other evidence your analysis has drawn upon:

- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- Demographic factors set out in [Norfolk's Story 2021](#)
- [Digital Inclusion and COVID-19](#) equality impact assessments
- Norfolk County Council [Area Reports](#) on Norfolk's JSNA relating to protected characteristics
- Business intelligence and management data, as quoted in this report
- Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty codes of practice

8. Further information

For further information about this equality impact assessment please contact Rebecca Doody, Strategic Commissioner, 01603 692471



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact **xxx** on **xxx** or **xxx** (Text relay)

Annex 1 – table of protected characteristics

The following table sets out details of each protected characteristic. Remember that people with multiple characteristics may face the most barriers:

Characteristic	Who this covers
Age	Adults and children etc, or specific/different age groups
Disability	<p>A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.</p> <p>This may include but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with mobility issues (eg wheelchair or cane users, people of short stature, people who do not have mobility in a limb etc) • Blind and partially sighted people • People who are D/deaf or hearing impaired • People with learning disabilities • People who have mental health issues • People who identify as neurodiverse (this refers to neurological differences including, for example, dyspraxia, dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, the autistic spectrum and others) • People with some long-term health conditions which meet the criteria of a disability.
People with a long-term health condition	People with long-term health conditions which meet the criteria of a disability.
Gender reassignment	<p>People who identify as transgender (defined as someone who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process or part of a process to reassign their sex. It is not necessary for the person to be under medical supervision or undergoing surgery).</p> <p>You may want to consider the needs of people who identify as non-binary (a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine).</p>
Marriage/civil partnerships	People who are married or in a civil partnership. They may be of the opposite or same sex.
Pregnancy and maternity	Maternity refers to the period after birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination

Characteristic	Who this covers
	is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
Race	<p>Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, or nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.</p> <p>A racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups, for example a person may identify as Black British, British Asian, British Sikh, British Jew, Romany Gypsy or Irish Traveller.</p>
Religion/belief	Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or no belief. To be protected, a belief must satisfy various criteria, including that it is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered a protected religion or religious belief.
Sex	This covers men and women. Also consider the needs of people who identify as intersex (people who have variations in sex characteristics) and non-binary (a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine).
Sexual orientation	People who identify as straight/heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Document review

Reviewed and updated:	Reviewer
October and November 2016	Corporate Planning & Partnerships Manager
December 2017	Equality & Diversity Manager
October 2018	Equality & Diversity Manager
May and November 2019	Equality & Diversity Manager
May and November 2020	Equality & Diversity Manager
June and September 2021	Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

¹ The Act states that public bodies must pay 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 people who share a relevant protected characteristic¹ and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

[The full Equality Act 2021 is available on legislation.gov.uk.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

People and Communities Select Committee

Item No. 10

Report title:	Drug and Alcohol Member Working Group: Alcohol health promotion campaign
Date of meeting:	17th November 2023
Responsible Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bill Borrett (Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing)
Responsible Director:	Stuart Lines

Introduction from Chair of the Member Working Group

Alcohol and drug misuse can cause significant harm to individuals, families, and communities. Norfolk County Council (NCC) Public Health already supports Norfolk residents experiencing alcohol or drug addiction to access appropriate treatment and support to help reduce their use and move into recovery. The Ready to Change online behaviour change tool developed by Public Health helps those who want to make healthy lifestyle choices such as drinking less alcohol.

A Member Working Group set up by the People and Communities Committee focused on looking at ways to change social attitudes towards excessive alcohol consumption and recreational drug use, to review what is known to work and not work to effect behaviour change, and to develop a positive campaign and messaging around healthier drinking and preventing recreational drug use.

The campaign proposed will help to achieve NCC's Corporate Delivery Plan goal of continuing to deliver the Public Health Wellbeing Programme and is in line with the Public Health Strategic Plan which seeks to lead on adult healthy lifestyle and behaviour change to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population.

Executive Summary

Members reviewed an overview of data, the Stages of Change model, what is effective to bring about behaviour change and national and local alcohol campaigns.

The data showed that although there has been an overall decrease in average drinking, around 186,000 people in Norfolk are still estimated to drink more than the recommended 14 units per week. Drinking is heaviest in middle-age, and more so for men than for women.

While recreational drug use is a concern, the evidence base for what works to prevent it is weak – there is currently a national programme underway to help to build this evidence base. There is more of an evidence base for tackling unhealthy levels of alcohol consumption.

Members decided that we should focus on developing a campaign on alcohol, aimed at middle-aged male drinkers aged 40-75 years in the pre-contemplation phase when people are not yet thinking about making changes to their drinking behaviours. It was decided to

develop a campaign to encourage people to think about their behaviour and to increase their awareness of the benefits of drinking less.

Actions required.

- 1. To endorse the recommendation of the working group for a targeted campaign aimed at educating the audience on what 14 units equates to, increase awareness of the benefits of drinking less and signpost users to trusted sources of information.**

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1. On 18 November 2022 the People and Communities Select Committee agreed to set up a working group to look at ways to change social attitudes towards excessive alcohol consumption and recreational drug use. The Working Group was supported by staff from Public Health and the Communications Team, and consisted of four councillors:

- Cllr Fran Whymark
- Cllr Brenda Jones
- Cllr Paul Neale
- Cllr Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh.

Three meetings were held to review the data, look at the different ways to effect behaviour changes, review campaign approaches and develop ideas for a Norfolk communications campaign.

1.2. Stages of change model

- 1.3. Members reviewed the five stages of change that people typically move through when making a change in their lives: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. Treatment at the more severe end of drug and alcohol misuse is already in place. The Ready to Change behaviour change tool developed by NCC Public Health is available for those who are contemplating, preparing, or taking action to improve their health behaviours.

As the Working Group was set up to look at social attitudes, Members agreed to focus on those people at the precontemplation stage which is when people are unaware or have not acknowledged the need to change or start new behaviours and have no existing intention to do so in the foreseeable future.

1.4. Campaign effectiveness

- 1.5. Members reviewed the evidence on what approaches worked well for different groups and substances. They accepted that there is little evidence of effective

campaigns to change attitudes in adults about recreational drugs and that interventions (not campaigns) work better for children and young people.

- 1.6. Members acknowledged that mass media health campaigns about alcohol can be recalled by individuals and can achieve changes in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about alcohol and saw how national campaigns have resulted in high campaign recognition and awareness of the existence of weekly consumption guidelines.

Members considered some of the data around alcohol consumption:

- An estimated 186,000 people in Norfolk drink more than 14 units/week (2015-18)
- An estimated 96,000 people in Norfolk binge drink (2015-18)
- Drinking is heaviest in middle age, and more so for men than for women.

Members decided to narrow down the target audience to a size that could be successfully reached in a communications campaign tailored to a particular group. It was agreed to focus on men aged 40-75 from lower socio-economic groups (which tend to suffer more alcohol harm) who were in the precontemplation phase of behaviour change.

1.7. **Campaign proposal**

- 1.8. Members considered examples of similar campaigns from other areas and the proposed Norfolk campaign strategy. Members supported the overall creative concept and agreed that the key message should be to drink no more than 14 units per week (in line with national guidance) and favoured a 'Max 14' Stop Sign concept. The campaign will signpost people to Ready to Change as a reliable source of information on how to make changes.

The campaign will sit within a suite of ongoing Public Health campaigns supporting people to make healthy choices about their health, in line with the Public Health Strategic Plan which seeks to lead on adult healthy lifestyle and behaviour change to improve the health and wellbeing for the local population.

Early designs and messages were tested with the residents panel and revised in line with their comments. Further testing was done, and the feedback was more favourable – suggestions made are being considered for future iterations of the design.

2. **Proposals**

- 2.1. The proposal is for a campaign:

- targeted at 40–74-year-old males with 2+ dimensions of deprivation, aimed at
 - educating the audience on what 14 units equates to in terms of drinks representation (pints, glasses, shots and bottles)
 - the recommended weekly guidelines

- increasing awareness of the benefits of drinking less
- signposting users to a trusted source of information i.e. Ready to Change as a self-help tool to change drinking behaviours.

2.2. The intention is for the campaign to be launched in the new year to coincide with the 2024 Dry January national campaign, funded through the existing Public Health Campaign budget.

2.3. Examples of the developing creative design are included in Appendix A.

3. Impact of the Proposal

3.1. The campaign will target 40–74-year-old males living with 2+ dimensions of deprivation – 3.5% of Norfolk population (32,000 people)

The campaign aims to educate the audience on what 14 units equates to in terms of drinks representation (pints, glasses, shots and bottles), increase awareness of the benefits of drinking less and signpost users to a trusted source of information (Ready to Change) as a self-help tool to change drinking behaviours.

4. Financial Implications

4.1. Up to £20,000 has been allocated for this campaign from within the Public Health 2023/24 budget

5. Resource Implications

5.1. **Staff:**

The campaign will be supported by existing staff from within the Public Health and Communications Teams

5.2. **Property:**

N/A

5.3. **IT:**

N/A – the Ready to Change website is already in place

6. Other Implications

N/A

6.1. **Legal Implications**

N/A

6.2. **Human Rights implications**

N/A

6.3. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included)**

See Appendix B

6.4. **Health and Safety implications (where appropriate)**

N/A

6.5. **Sustainability implications (where appropriate)**

N/A

6.6. **Any other implications**

7. **Actions required**

- 7.1. **To endorse the recommendation of the working group for a targeted campaign aimed at educating the audience on what 14 units equates to, increase awareness of the benefits of drinking less and signpost users to trusted sources of information.**

8. **Background Papers**

- 8.1. **None**

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper, please get in touch with:

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01603

638417

Email address: Diane.steiner@norfolk.gov.uk



If you need this report in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Appendix A- Campaign Designs

Examples of the developing campaign design style are below. These will be accompanied by messages about how much a unit of alcohol is for wine, beer and spirits, the benefits of drinking less and signposting to Ready to Change.

The poster features a dark background with a calendar grid. On the left, the text reads: **ready to change** (with a small logo), **REDUCING** (in large yellow letters), **YOUR ALCOHOL CAN IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH** (in white and yellow letters). The calendar grid has days MON, TUES, WED, THURS, FR, SAT, SUN, and NOTES. A glass of red wine is placed over the WED and THURS boxes, with the text "Quiz night" written in yellow. A glass of orange wine is placed over the FR and SAT boxes, with the text "work drinks" written in yellow. At the bottom, a red banner contains the text **DRINK LESS THAN 14 UNITS PER WEEK** and a white octagonal sign that says "STOP BEFORE 14 units".

DRINK LESS THAN 14 UNITS PER WEEK



DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH YOU'RE *drinking?*

MON	TUES	WED	THURS
		<i>Quiz night</i>	
			
FRI	SUN	NOTES	
<i>work drinks</i>		$14 = 6$ units pints 1 pint low strength beer (ABV 3.6%) = 2 units	

Reducing your drinking can have huge benefits to your physical and mental health:

- ✓ Sleeping better
- ✓ Saving money
- ✓ Losing weight
- ✓ Banishing hangovers

Ready to Change is a free tool to help you drink less and develop healthy habits for a healthier lifestyle.

ready to
change
your way to better health

 **Norfolk**
County Council

DO YOU KNOW
MUCH HOW
YOU'RE
drinking?

MON	TUES	WED	THURS
		Quiz night	
FRI	SAT	SUN	NOTES
work drinks			

DRINK LESS THAN 14 UNITS PER WEEK



DRINK LESS THAN 14 UNITS PER WEEK



DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH YOU'RE *drinking?*

MON



TUES



WED



THURS



FRI



SAT



SUN



NOTES



Reducing your drinking can have huge benefits to your physical and mental health:

- ✓ Sleeping better
- ✓ Saving money
- ✓ Losing weight
- ✓ Banishing hangovers

Ready to Change is a free tool to help you drink less and develop healthy habits for a healthier lifestyle.

ready to
change
your way to better health



Norfolk
County Council

Appendix B



Norfolk County Council

Drug & Alcohol Member Working Group

Equality Impact Assessment – Findings and Recommendations

20 September 2023

**Dr David Thurkettle, Public Health Principal,
Prevention (Health Improvement).**

1. The proposal - Targeted alcohol campaign

- 1.1 The proposal is for a campaign targeted at 40–74-year-old males from lower socio-economic groups with two or more dimensions of deprivation, aimed at educating the audience on what 14 units equates to in terms of drinks representation (pints, glasses, shots and bottles), increasing awareness of the benefits of drinking less, signposting users to a trusted sources of information i.e., Ready to Change as a self-help tool to change drinking behaviours.

2. Legal context

- 2.1 Public authorities are required by the Equality Act 2010 to give due regard to equality when exercising public functions¹. This is called the ‘Public Sector Equality Duty’.
- 2.2 The purpose of an equality impact assessment is to consider the potential impact of a proposed change or issue on people with protected characteristics (see Annex 1 for information about the different protected characteristics).
- 2.3 If the assessment identifies any detrimental impact, this enables mitigating actions to be developed.
- 2.4 It is not always possible to adopt the course of action that will best promote the interests of people with protected characteristics. However, equality assessments enable informed decisions to be made that take every opportunity to minimise disadvantage.

3. Information about the people affected by the proposal

- 3.1 This proposal will primarily impact on **40–74-year-old males with two or more dimensions of deprivation**. This includes residents, service users and/or staff with a range of protected characteristics, in relation to disability, sex, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief, age and sexual orientation.
- 3.2 It has been calculated that the number of males aged 40-74 with two or more dimensions of deprivation is approximately 32,000.
- 3.3 A breakdown for further protected characteristics within the selected group does not exist (sex and age already being included in the definition of the group).
- 3.4 Nationally, data show that drinking patterns differed markedly between ethnic groups: the proportion of adults usually drinking above 14 units per week, and frequency of drinking, was highest in White ethnicities.¹

¹ NHS Digital, ‘Health Survey England Additional Analyses, Ethnicity and Health, 2011-2019 Experimental statistics’, (2022) [[Drinking alcohol - NHS Digital](#), accessed 19 September 2023].

- 3.5 Nationally, data show that a higher proportion of LGB adults drank to increased levels of risk and consumed a higher average number of alcohol units weekly than heterosexual adults.²
- 3.6 It seems there is some evidence to suggest transgender individuals have more harmful drinking behaviours than cisgender individuals, but evidence is limited because gender identity measures are not routinely collected or results reported.³
- 3.7 Specific data relating to alcohol consumption amongst other protected characteristic groups (disability, religion or marriage status) could not be found.

4. Potential impact

- 4.1 Based on the evidence available, this proposal is likely to have a positive impact on white men aged 40-74, regardless of sexual orientation, gender reassignment status, disability or long-term health condition, religion, or marital status.
- 4.2 This is because the approach taken in designing the proposal was to take a targeted evidence-based approach to addressing alcohol consumption in the group suffering the greatest harm.
- 4.3 Whilst the campaign will be targeted at the identified group, the campaign will be visible to individuals with other protected characteristics for whom the messages around alcohol consumption will be equally relevant. The campaign will therefore have a potentially positive impact on all groups.
- 4.4 The campaign design and messaging, and the multiple forms of distribution in traditional print, digital, and social media, will ensure as wide a reach as possible amongst all socio-economic groups.

5. Evidence used to inform this assessment

- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- Demographic factors set out in [Norfolk's Story August 2023 \(norfolkinsight.org.uk\)](#)
- [Digital Inclusion and COVID-19](#) equality impact assessments

² NHS Digital, 'Health and health-related behaviours of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual adults', (2021) [[Health and health-related behaviours of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual adults \(digital.nhs.uk\)](#)], accessed 19 September 2023].

³ Drinkaware, 'Alcohol use amongst gender and sexual minorities in the UK: a review of evidence', (2021) [[lgbt-scoping-review-summary.pdf \(drinkaware.co.uk\)](#)], accessed 19 September 2023].

- Norfolk County Council [Area Reports](#) on Norfolk's JSNA relating to protected characteristics
- Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty codes of practice
- Intelligence and analysis from NHS Digital and Drinkaware, as cited in the report.

6. Further information

For further information about this equality impact assessment please contact **Dr David Thirkettle, Public Health Principal, Prevention (Health Improvement)** david.thirkettle@norfolk.gov.uk.



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact **xxx** on **xxx** or **xxx** (Text relay)

Annex 1 – table of protected characteristics

The following table sets out details of each protected characteristic. Remember that people with multiple characteristics may face the most barriers:

Characteristic	Who this covers
Age	Adults and children etc, or specific/different age groups
Disability	<p>A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.</p> <p>This may include but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People with mobility issues (eg wheelchair or cane users, people of short stature, people who do not have mobility in a limb etc)• Blind and partially sighted people• People who are D/deaf or hearing impaired• People with learning disabilities• People who have mental health issues• People who identify as neurodiverse (this refers to neurological differences including, for example, dyspraxia, dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, the autistic spectrum and others)• People with some long-term health conditions which meet the criteria of a disability.
People with a long-term health condition	People with long-term health conditions which meet the criteria of a disability.

Characteristic	Who this covers
Gender reassignment	<p>People who identify as transgender (defined as someone who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process or part of a process to reassign their sex. It is not necessary for the person to be under medical supervision or undergoing surgery).</p> <p>You may want to consider the needs of people who identify as non-binary (a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine).</p>
Marriage/civil partnerships	<p>People who are married or in a civil partnership. They may be of the opposite or same sex.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Maternity refers to the period after birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.</p>
Race	<p>Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, or nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.</p> <p>A racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups, for example a person may identify as Black British, British Asian, British Sikh, British Jew, Romany Gypsy or Irish Traveller.</p>
Religion/belief	<p>Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or no belief. To be protected, a belief must satisfy various criteria, including that it is a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour. Denominations or sects within a religion can be considered a protected religion or religious belief.</p>
Sex	<p>This covers men and women. Also consider the needs of people who identify as intersex (people who have variations in sex characteristics) and non-</p>

Characteristic	Who this covers
	binary (a spectrum of gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine).
Sexual orientation	People who identify as straight/heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual.

ⁱ The Act states that public bodies must pay 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 people who share a relevant protected characteristicⁱ and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

[The full Equality Act 2010 is available on legislation.gov.uk.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15)

People and Communities Select Committee

Item No: 11

Report Title: Strategic and financial planning 2024-25

Date of Meeting: 17 November 2023

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Andrew Jamieson (Cabinet Member for Finance)

Responsible Director: Harvey Bullen (Director of Strategic Finance)

Executive Summary

The appended report, which was considered by Cabinet in October 2023, represents a key milestone in the Council's budget setting process for 2024-25. Cabinet has already sought Select Committee input into the 2024-25 budget process, in respect of the overall planning context, and broad approach to the development of saving proposals.

This Select Committee report now appends the latest Cabinet report in order to provide details of the saving proposals identified to date for 2024-25 budget setting. This is intended to support the Select Committee's discussion of the specific proposals and enable the Committee to provide its feedback and input to a future meeting of Cabinet and thereby to inform budget decisions.

This report therefore forms an important part of the process of developing the 2024-25 Budget, representing a key opportunity for the Select Committee to provide its views on priorities and the budget proposals for the services within its remit.

Recommendations / Action Required

The Select Committee is asked:

1. To consider the latest Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy position as reported to Cabinet in October 2023 (Appendix 1), noting in particular the emerging risks and uncertainties within the Council's planning position.
2. To consider and comment on the savings proposals for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix 1, which fall within the Committee's remit.

3. To note the budget gap which remains to be closed for 2024-25 and in this context to comment on any areas the Select Committee would recommend exploring for savings development in relation to the services within the Select Committee's remit, in order to provide further input to the 2024-25 budget process and inform the final package of saving proposals put forward to Cabinet later in the year. In particular the Committee is asked to consider savings opportunities under the following headings:
 - a. New initiatives which would deliver savings;
 - b. Activities which could be ceased in order to deliver a saving;
 - c. Activities which the Council should seek to maintain at the current level as far as possible (i.e. areas where the Committee considers there is limited scope for savings).

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 Cabinet has sought input from the Council's three Select Committees in relation to developing budget proposals for the 2024-25 Budget. This continues the approach adopted to setting the budget in previous years. Select Committees therefore received an update on the Council's budget setting process in July 2023, and in particular were invited to:
 - Consider the overall Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy position as reported to Cabinet in June 2023.
 - Consider the key issues for 2024-25 budget setting, overall service strategies as set out within the 2023-24 Budget Book, and budget setting principles.
 - To consider any specific areas of activity that the Select Committee would recommend exploring for savings development.
- 1.2 Select Committee comments from the July 2023 meeting cycle were reported to Cabinet in October. Following the July Select Committee meetings, Cabinet considered savings proposals for 2024-25, totalling £26.485m. Select Committees now have an opportunity to consider these proposals and the package of measures currently being consulted on.
- 1.3 At the time of preparing the October Cabinet report, one saving was identified as requiring specific public consultation: Review contracts providing respite for adults with learning disabilities and identify a more cost effective and efficient way of delivering this service. Following further review it has been confirmed that specific consultation is not necessary, and this saving will form part of the main overall consultation process.
- 1.4 This report therefore represents the key opportunity for Select Committees to provide input to 2024-25 budget setting and the Committee is invited to

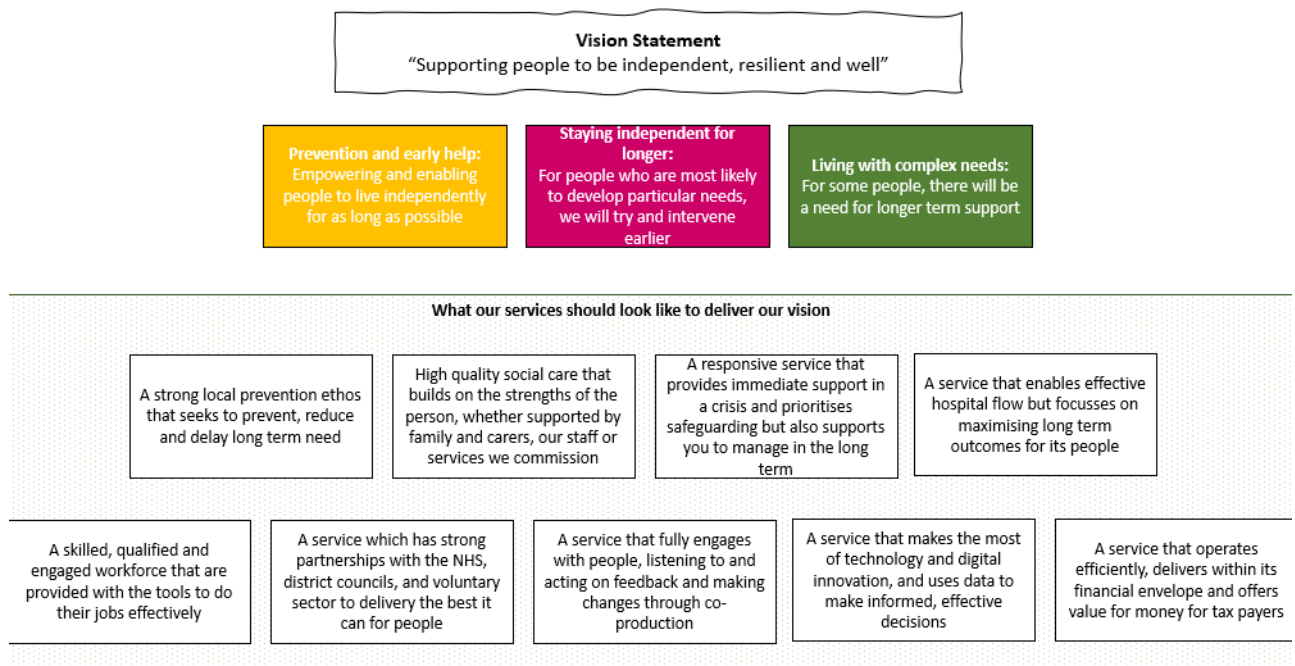
comment on the substantive proposals which have been developed and are currently undergoing public consultation.

- 1.5 Any comments from Select Committees will be reported to Cabinet later in the budget setting process in order to inform final budget recommendations to Full Council.

2. Context

Adult Social Care Departmental Strategy and Vision

- 2.1 The Better Together, for Norfolk Council strategy creates five clear priorities. The Adult Social Care strategy underpinning the departments delivery of these priorities is called Promoting Independence: Living Well and Changing Lives. For Norfolk, our vision for Adult Social Care is to “support people to be independent, resilient and well”.



- 2.2 Promoting Independence: Living Well and Changing Lives represents the second phase of our strategy and has eight core ambitions:

- **Prevention and early help** – a clear strategy, targeted interventions and a re-purposed ‘front door’ which put people and their family carers at the heart.
- **Integrated Health and Social Care Offer** – integrated health and social care offer in each locality to help people retain independence

- **Living Well social work** – being led by people who direct their own choices, addressing holding lists, reviews and practice quality
- **A stable, modern care market** where 85% of providers are good or outstanding
- A step change in **housing choices** for older people and disabled people and through our building programme
- **Transformation of the Norse Care estate** to match market needs and ensure it remains a leader in the sector
- Driving the **‘Eight technologies that will change the face of health and social care’**
- **Workforce Development** – Developing skills and capacity in social care and the care market

2.3 Each of these ambitions is crucial in delivering Adult Social Care not just in a sustainable way, or a way that offers value for money, but one that is progressive and puts prevention at the heart of the offer.

2.4 As we came out of the pandemic, we developed a 3-pronged approach to driving the department forward. This focused on:

Transformation of Adult Social Care

- Our new Connecting Communities programme
- Short term offer, in particular driving home first principles to support people home from hospital
- Commissioning the Care Market (market shaping and accommodation development)

The national reform of Adult Social Care

- Delivering the Government’s “Putting People at the Heart of Care” white paper
- Delivering the Integration white paper

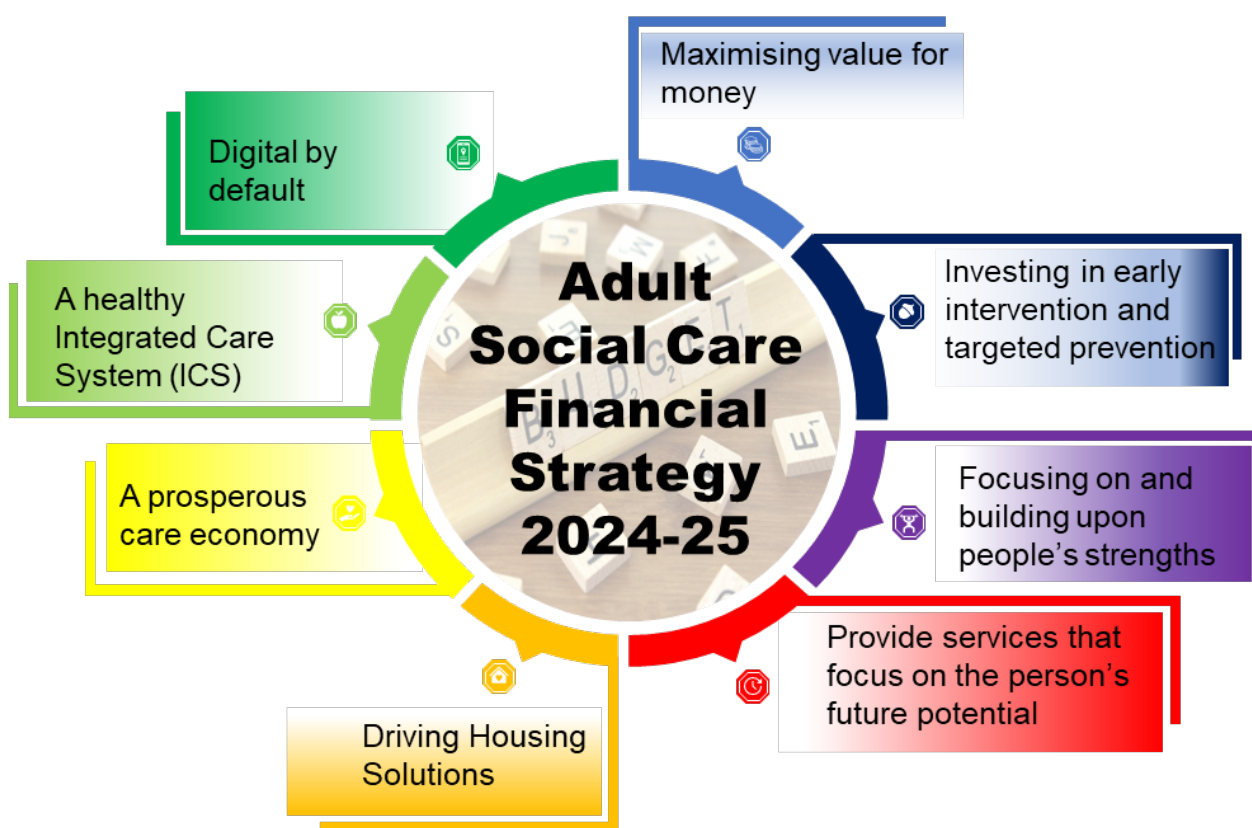
The recovery of Adult Social Care

- Clearing the backlogs of care that have built during the pandemic
- Recruitment and Retention of our Social Care workforce
- The wellbeing of our staff
- Stabilising the external care market
- Decreasing our interim care lists

2.5 After a summer of engagement with people who draw on our services, we are now refreshing our service strategy and during 2024-25 will launch our refreshed Promoting Independence Strategy.

Adult Social Care Financial Strategy

- 2.6 The Adult Social Care financial strategy is firmly intertwined with both the service's vision "to support people to be independent, resilient and well", as well as the department's Promoting Independence strategy.
- 2.7 We know our Promoting Independence approach has helped, and will continue to help, the service to deliver the significant financial savings needed to continue to meet the increasing demands for social care across Norfolk. Our financial strategy for 2024-25 for achieving savings and financial sustainability is focussed on:



Whilst described as individual pieces of our financial strategy, it is important to not see each in isolation. It is the synergy and cross-over between each element of the strategy that enables us to drive towards a level of financial sustainability.

2.8 A healthy Integrated Care System (ICS)

We are partners with many organisations in Norfolk and Waveney under our Integrated Care System. Working with these partners we jointly seek to reduce system demand, whilst also focusing on improving long term health and care outcomes for the people of Norfolk. We work at both a local level

and system level as a key partner whose footprint covers the whole population. This includes both the alignment to localised Primary Care but also an efficient and sustainable system of supporting people upon leaving hospital and into the community.

Examples of our approach:

Through our collaboration with the Integrated Care Board we seek to utilise investment and funding pots such as the Better Care Fund in the most impactful way. We work together to drive innovation at a macro level and towards a common whole system goal.

Whilst recognising that helping people leave hospital is an important part of our systems aims. We do so by being strong partners and advocates in ensuring people are supported towards meeting their long-term goals. The majority of people are able to return home post a stay in hospital and we support a number of these to regain their independence in doing so.

Children's Services Context

- 2.9 Children's Services is responsible for ensuring and overseeing the effective delivery of services for children, working closely with system-wide partners, including both the provision of social care services and high needs special educational provision. If you're a young person growing up in Norfolk, we want you to have a future here and to achieve your potential regardless of your background. We want you to attend the best schools and have the best services to support you and your families. In short, if you're a young person growing up in Norfolk, then we want you to Flourish.
- 2.10 Children's Services nationally continue to operate in a challenging context; high levels of need across numerous areas of service continues to be experienced and, in particular, in relation to children with special educational needs and children at risk of harm. The service also continues to respond to newer issues within society, and the range of responsibilities for the department continues to widen to tackle issues such child sexual and criminal exploitation and the threat of radicalisation.
- 2.11 The cost-of-living crisis is an additional factor that has emerged last year both directly in relation to financial pressures increasing the challenges facing families who may already be struggling, and indirectly. It is currently unclear what impact this may have upon demand for services, as well as the impact upon our own workforce and that of the wider system. Persistent high inflation for over 12 months along with rises in National Living Wage has seen costs increases across all services.

- 2.12 Nationally, many local authorities are reporting very significant overspends for their Children's Services, with cost pressures within similar areas for Norfolk. The longer-term impact of Covid-19 and lockdowns upon children and families, the cost-of-living crisis, high levels of inflation, and challenging market forces continue to exist outside of the control of local authorities, including Norfolk.
- 2.13 The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Eastern Region of ADCS, Local Government Association and the County Council Network have all reported in recent times regarding the challenges within the Children's Services and, in particular, the financial pressures faced by authorities across the country much of which is driven by increased demand and lack of sufficiency across the country.
- 2.14 The service again saw significant investment in 2023-24 but, despite this, the service is experiencing pressures within the social care placements and support and Home to School Transport budgets, both primarily due to unit costs, inflationary pressures, and also due to a small number of children and young people with very complex needs. This scenario mirrors the national picture.
- 2.15 The number of children being looked after remain relatively stable. This is counter to the experience of many other local authorities and an outcome of the significant transformation in recent years from the front door and community & partnership teams, through family support and into social work teams. Our in-house residential services have been supporting some young people with very complex needs.

Financial Strategy and 2024-25 Savings Proposals

- 2.16 Children's Services core strategy and transformation approach is working, and our transformation programme evidences ongoing delivery of significant financial savings and avoidance of further financial pressures through keeping families together and reducing numbers in care since we started our transformation programme. Alongside the significant financial benefits, last year's inspection by Ofsted has confirmed that the programme and service have also delivered improved outcomes for children and families.
- 2.17 Children's Services continues to undertake a substantial transformation programme to both improve outcomes for children and young people as well as delivering financial savings.
- 2.18 Given the success of the programme to date, our transformative approach to services remains core to our strategic financial approach. Existing schemes continue to be embedded and deliver benefits, whilst new schemes continue

to be delivered within the five key themes around which our transformation strategy has been built:

- Inclusion;
- Prevention and Early Intervention;
- Quality of Practice;
- Edge of Care and Alternatives to Care; and
- Re-shaping the care and specialist support market.




Our five strategic themes



Inclusion

- Supporting more children to stay in mainstream education.
- Investing in specialist resource bases.
- Reducing school exclusions.

Prevention and early help

- Creation of the children's advice and duty service to ensure children getting the right support as quickly as possible.
- Developing a new early prevention model, so that families get help earlier.

Effective practice model

- Creation of a new social work model – with a team around practitioners, so that they can spend more time with families.
- New case discussion meetings, deploying resources earlier rather than at the point of crisis.
- Specialist professionals, such as substance misuse workers and domestic abuse specialists to support social work teams.

Edge of care and alternatives to care

- New therapeutic service for families with children at the edge of care (SIB).
- Turnaround short breaks alternatives to care provision.
- A focus on family finding and building support networks from extended families.
- New Roads – specialist hubs, wrapping support around our most vulnerable children and young people.

Managing the care market and creating capacity

- £120m investment in special educational needs, including at least three new special schools.
- £5m investment in semi-independent provision.
- Family Values – using behavioural science to redesign our approach to recruiting foster carers, alongside a new enhanced fostering model.
- Valuing Care Model – robust needs analysis and outcome based commissioning of placements.
- Dedicated team for our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

2.19 The key themes of our transformative agenda remain unchanged as they continue to be pertinent to addressing the considerable, ongoing challenges and uncertainties that face children's services and the wider associated system throughout the country. The service will continue to drive this work forward, working alongside the increased strategic partnership working of recent years that has generated and driven system change in Norfolk that, as the County Council alone, could not be delivered. The ongoing challenges and uncertainties are driving significant financial pressures across many authorities due to increasing costs of placements and the changing type and, in some cases, increasing complexity of need as societal changes result in increased and more varied extra familial harm.

- 2.20 Our transformation programme has an ongoing programme of work alongside activity to identify further new initiatives that could deliver substantial transformation. The services' core financial strategy for achieving savings is on an invest to save basis that aligns with this strategic approach, enabling the service to respond to the changing needs within communities and the current and future financial challenges by developing innovative new approaches.
- 2.21 In recent years, the service has been supported to invest in staffing to enable transformation of services. The people who deliver our services to children and families are the most important asset that the service has, whether these be directly employed staff or indirectly employed through partners and commissioned providers. Having the right people in the right roles delivers the outcomes needed for Norfolk's children whilst also delivering good value for money. That said, where appropriate, technology and automation continue to be exploited to deliver committed efficiency, and are a theme of exploration as new opportunities transpire.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The report to October Cabinet reproduced as Appendix 1 provides an update on the financial planning context for the County Council, including:
- the 2024-25 Budget proposals which have been developed so far;
 - the proposed approach to public consultation on, and equality impact assessments of, the 2024-25 Budget;
 - the emerging service and other budget pressures which have been identified to date; and
 - key areas of risk and uncertainty.
- 3.2 The Select Committee's views are particularly sought in relation to the services within its remit on (1) the new proposals identified for 2024-25 budget setting and currently undergoing public consultation, and (2) further areas for savings development to bridge the remaining 2024-25 budget gap. The Committee's feedback will help shape budget and saving proposal development for 2024-25, assist in the identification of key pressures and priorities for the 2024-25 Budget, and (ultimately) inform Cabinet's recommendations on the budget proposals to Full Council later in the year.
- 3.3 The financial approach and key strategies for Directorates delivering services which fall broadly within the remit of this Committee have been set out within the County Council's [2023-24 Budget Book](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/budget-and-council-tax/budget-book-2023-27.pdf)¹.

¹ <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/budget-and-council-tax/budget-book-2023-27.pdf>

4. Impact of the Proposal

- 4.1 Select Committee input will support in shaping budget proposals and thereby contribute to the 2024-25 budget setting process. Individual recommendations from Select Committees will help to inform budget proposals and will therefore ultimately impact on Departmental budgets and service delivery for 2024-25. Details of specific impacts will be identified and reported in later stages of the budget process. Further impacts are also set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

5. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 5.1 As set out in the appended report. Select Committees have a specific role in policy development and therefore are invited to comment and advise Cabinet on budget options within their remit as in previous years.

6. Alternative Options

- 6.1 As set out in the appended report, a range of options remain open at this stage. The purpose of this report is to provide Select Committees with an opportunity to engage with the budget process and inform the development of specific options for the 2024-25 Budget.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Immediate financial implications are highlighted in the appended report. Any implications arising from the Select Committee's comments will be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet as part of 2024-25 budget setting as appropriate.

8. Resource Implications

7.1 Staff:

There are no direct implications arising from this report although existing and proposed saving plans will include activities linked to staffing budgets. In addition there is a potential that further staffing implications may arise linked to specific saving proposals developed. These implications will be identified and reported as they arise later in the budget planning process. Further details are set out in the appended report.

7.2 Property:

The appended report includes saving proposals related to declaring surplus and ultimately disposing of sites. Services currently delivered from these sites will need to be relocated and delivered from alternative sites within the County Council's property estate. There are no direct property implications arising from

this report although existing and proposed saving plans will include activities linked to property budgets and assumptions around capital receipts to be achieved. In addition there is a potential that further property implications may arise linked to specific saving proposals developed and these implications will be identified and reported as they arise later in the budget planning process. Further details are set out in the appended report.

7.3 IT:

There are no direct IT implications arising from this report although existing and proposed saving plans include activities linked to IMT budgets. In addition there is a potential that further IT implications may arise linked to specific saving proposals developed and these implications will be identified and reported as they arise later in the budget planning process. Further details are set out in the appended report.

9. Other Implications

8.1 Legal Implications:

As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

8.2 Human Rights Implications:

As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):

As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):

As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):

As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):

As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

8.7 Any Other Implications:

As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

10. Risk Implications / Assessment

9.1 As set out in the appended Cabinet paper.

11. Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked:

1. To consider the latest Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy position as reported to Cabinet in October 2023 (Appendix 1), noting in particular the emerging risks and uncertainties within the Council's planning position.
2. To consider and comment on the savings proposals for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix 1, which fall within the Committee's remit.
3. To note the budget gap which remains to be closed for 2024-25 and in this context to comment on any areas the Select Committee would recommend exploring for savings development in relation to the services within the Select Committee's remit, in order to provide further input to the 2024-25 budget process and inform the final package of saving proposals put forward to Cabinet later in the year. In particular the Committee is asked to consider savings opportunities under the following headings:
 - a. New initiatives which would deliver savings;
 - b. Activities which could be ceased in order to deliver a saving;
 - c. Activities which the Council should seek to maintain at the current level as far as possible (i.e. areas where the Committee considers there is limited scope for savings).

12. Background Papers

11.1 As set out in the appended Cabinet paper, plus

Norfolk County Council Budget Book 2023-24 <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/budget-and-council-tax/budget-book-2023-27.pdf>

Norfolk County Council Constitution, [Part 7 – Overview and Scrutiny Bodies](#), para 3.9 – Membership and Areas of Responsibility of Select Committees.

Strategic and Financial Planning reports considered by Select Committees in July 2023 as follows:

- [Corporate Select Committee, 10/07/2023](#)
- [Infrastructure and Development Select Committee, 12/07/2023](#)
- [People and Communities Select Committee, 14/07/2023](#)

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Cabinet

Item No:

Decision making report title: Strategic and financial planning 2024-25

Date of meeting: 2 October 2023

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Andrew Jamieson (Cabinet Member for Finance)

Responsible Director: Harvey Bullen (Director of Strategic Finance)

Is this a key decision? Yes/No

If this is a key decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 5 June 2023

Introduction from Cabinet Member

It remains the case that there is substantial uncertainty about funding for 2024-25 onwards, in spite of the Government's Policy Statement published shortly before the 2023-24 Finance Settlement. The County Council faces a significant challenge in developing the Budget for 2024-25. There remains a Budget gap, and there are simultaneously severe headwinds in both the wider economy and public finances which will inevitably serve to increase cost pressures.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) agreed in February 2023 set out a gap of £126.522m for the period 2024-25 to 2026-27 including a gap of £46.216m for the first year, 2024-25. In June, Cabinet agreed to extend the MTFS for an additional year, 2027-28 which added a further £18.689m to the budget gap to be addressed and resulted in a total revised gap of £145.211m for the MTFS.

In June Cabinet also agreed to begin the Budget setting process, agreeing the timetable and proposed consultation process for 2024-25, as well as allocating saving targets to each Department. The Council's well-established process for annual budget setting forms a key part of the Council's robust approach to developing savings proposals at the scale and pace required to support the preparation of a balanced 2024-25 Budget.

DLUHC published the [Local government finance policy statement 2023-24 to 2024-25](#) in December 2022. Although this included 2024-25 indicative figures for some specific grants at a national level, individual authority grant allocations remain

unknown. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023-24 was essentially a one-year announcement providing limited certainty for planning for 2024-25 onwards.

The next fiscal event will be the Autumn Statement 2023, due to be announced 22 November 2023. Although this may provide an outline of the funding available for local government, further detail about local authority funding may not be available until the Local Government Provisional Settlement for 2024-25, which is unlikely to be before mid-December 2023.

It is in this climate of continuing uncertainty that the Council has developed proposals for the 2024-25 Budget. Many elements of the Budget remain unknown at this stage but have the potential to make a material impact on the level of resources available to Norfolk County Council to deliver services in the future. The level of proposals brought forward so far remain short of the level identified to be sought in June 2023 and intensive work therefore continues to develop further savings. Nonetheless the proposals set out in this paper make a significant contribution towards the overall quantum of savings required and provide a strong foundation which will enable the Cabinet to bring forward a package of balanced, sustainable budget proposals in January 2024. Ultimately this will enable the Council to continue to deliver the key services which are relied upon every day by Norfolk's residents, businesses and visitors.

This report therefore sets out details of the initial proposals for Cabinet consideration prior to public consultation. It also explains the broad approach planned to enable further options to be brought forward in order to contribute to a balanced Budget being proposed for 2024-25.

Executive Summary

The October Cabinet meeting is an important milestone in the process of developing the 2024-25 Budget, although work is required to identify further proposals that will support the development of a balanced Budget in January 2024 as described more fully within the body of the report.

This report provides an opportunity for Cabinet to consider the current 2024-25 Budget proposals prior to public consultation being undertaken, and in particular:

- details the 2024-25 Budget proposals which have been developed so far;
- summarises the proposed approach to public consultation on, and equality impact assessments of, the 2024-25 Budget;
- describes the emerging service and other budget pressures which have been identified to date; and
- details key areas of risk and uncertainty.

The Strategic and Financial Planning report should be read in conjunction with the latest Financial Monitoring report for 2023-24 included elsewhere on the agenda. Collectively, these reports serve to provide an overview of the Council's current and expected future financial position.

As set out throughout this report, significant uncertainty remains around the planning position for 2024-25, and this report therefore also summarises the remaining steps required in the process leading to budget-setting in February 2024. Recognising the scale of the budget gap to be addressed, the Budget planning process for 2024-25 includes a further round of savings development which will enable proposals to be developed to be included in the January Cabinet meeting. The MTFS position will need to be updated to reflect future government funding announcements, and as the scale of the impact of both social care reform announcements and any implications of the ongoing cost of living crisis on the Council become clearer. This will be reported to January 2024 Cabinet and considered by Scrutiny Committee as the budget setting process progresses to its conclusion at Full Council in February 2024.

Cabinet decisions based on the information in this report will ultimately help to support the development of a robust, balanced 2024-25 Budget for the Council.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended:

- 1. To consider and comment on the County Council's financial strategy as set out in this report and note that the Budget process is aligned to the overall policy and financial framework;**
- 2. To note that fiscal and policy decisions made by the Government in autumn 2023, may have implications for the County Council's budget planning position. The outcome of these national funding announcements, alongside the Local Government Finance Settlement, will have potentially significant impacts on the 2024-25 Budget position, which will not be fully known until later in the budget setting process.**
- 3. To consider and agree for planning purposes the latest assessment of significant areas of risk and uncertainty around emerging budget pressures for the 2024-25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy, which remain to be resolved and which may have a material impact on budget planning (section 8).**
- 4. To direct Executive Directors to identify proposals for further recurrent Departmental savings towards the original target of £46.200m agreed in June 2023, for consideration by Cabinet in January 2024 and to support final 2024-25 Budget recommendations to Full Council.**
- 5. To note that, taking into account the significant budget pressures for 2024-25, the S151 Officer anticipates recommending that the Council will need to apply the maximum council tax increase available in order to set a sustainable balanced budget for 2024-25;**
- 6. To note the responsibilities of the Director of Strategic Finance under section 114 of the Local Government Act 1988 and section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 to comment on the robustness of budget**

estimates as set out in section 9 and the further actions which may be required to set a balanced budget as set out in paragraph 10.3;

7. To consider and agree the proposals as set out in section 5 (Table 5) to be taken forward in budget planning for 2024-25, subject to final decisions about the overall Budget in February 2024, noting the level of savings already included from the 2023-24 Budget process (Table 3);
8. To agree that public consultation (as set out in section 11) and equality impact assessment (as set out in section 17) in relation to all other proposals for the 2024-25 Budget be undertaken as set out in section 11, and asking residents for their views on the level of council tax;
9. To note that the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) has the delegation to undertake any staff consultation relating to specific proposals as required to inform and support 2024-25 Budget setting decisions in January 2024;
10. To confirm the remaining next steps in the Budget planning process for 2024-25, and the Budget planning timetable (Appendix 1); and
11. To note and thank Select Committees for their input into the Budget development process for 2024-25 in July, and to invite Select Committees to comment further on the detailed proposals set out in this report when they meet in November 2023 (section 19).

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1. In [June 2023, Cabinet](#) agreed the approach to Budget setting for 2024-25. Cabinet also agreed the allocation of saving targets as shown in the table below. These represent the new savings which needed to be found in addition to those currently planned for in the 2023-24 MTFS position and set out in the Council's [2023-24 Budget Book](#)². As set out in this report, progress has been made in the development of saving proposals for 2024-25, but further savings need to be identified to get closer to the overall targets originally set. There also remains a possibility that the targets set out in the table below may need to be revisited later in the budget process in view of the significant uncertainties around the pressures and funding assumptions used at the time of preparing the MTFS, although this is considered unlikely at this stage. Further details are set out later in this report in relation to the risks to the Budget and MTFS position (section 8).

² <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/budget-and-council-tax/budget-book-2023-27.pdf>

Table 1: Saving targets by Department

<u>Savings Target</u>	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total MTFS saving target	Share
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%
Adult Social Services	20.700	16.100	19.600	7.800	64.200	44%
Children's Services	11.800	9.200	11.200	4.500	36.700	25%
Community and Environmental Services	11.400	8.900	10.800	4.300	35.400	24%
Strategy and Transformation	1.300	1.300	1.200	1.200	5.000	3%
Finance	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.900	3.900	3%
	46.200	36.500	43.800	18.700	145.200	100%

1.2. This report provides Cabinet with an update on the progress towards identifying proposals to address the 2024-25 target and the proposed approaches to tackling the remaining MTFS gap.

1.3. The savings targets were apportioned to departments in line with the Council's departmental structure at the time. The savings proposals and tables in this report are aligned to the same departments as the savings targets. Recategorisation of savings proposals to the new departmental structure agreed by [July 2023 Employment Committee](#) will be presented in the January 2024 budget papers to Cabinet.

2. Strategic Context

2.1. 2024-25 strategic and financial planning has been undertaken in the context of continued uncertainty around the ongoing war in Ukraine in terms of global energy and food supply, as well as inflationary pressures and the consequent impact on both the cost of services we deliver, and the demand for services as households and communities continue to struggle with the rising cost of living. These inflationary impacts have not been a short-term issue and have resulted in a permanent uplift in the Council's cost base in many key areas.

2.2. CPI inflation stands at 6.7% in August 2023 and the [Bank of England Monetary Policy Report August 2023](#) forecasts inflation to come down to around 5% in quarter four 2023, keep on falling in 2024, but not reach the 2% target until early 2025. At its meeting of 21 September 2023, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee maintained the Bank Rate interest rate at 5.25%, the highest level since February 2008. Increases in the base rate have consequences for the Council in relation to the cost of borrowing which impacts on the revenue budget through the cost of financing the capital programme.

2.3. Falls in real household incomes have had a significant impact on people and families, particularly (but not limited to) those experiencing financial or

employment vulnerability. This, in turn, could have a knock-on impact on demand for our services.

- 2.4. This cost of living crisis is expected to constrain growth in consumer spending, the main driver of economic growth. With business investment and demand for exports subdued, there is little room for economic growth.
- 2.5. It is in these difficult times that the County Council cannot afford any complacency and, working with its partners, will have to consider how best to deploy its own limited resources to support the most vulnerable people and communities, whilst continuing to provide wider public services.
- 2.6. The Council Strategy '[Better Together, for Norfolk 2021-2025](#)' is the key high-level document which, supported by the Medium Term Financial Strategy, sets the Council's strategic policy direction. The four-year strategy, developed following broad engagement, sets out the Council's vision – *'In Norfolk, we cherish our heritage, we embrace opportunity, and offer an extraordinary place in which to spend a lifetime. We want Norfolk to be the place where everyone can start life well, live well and age well, and where no one is left behind. We want our economy to be vibrant, entrepreneurial and sustainable, supported by the right jobs, skills, training and infrastructure. We want our communities to feel safe, healthy, empowered and connected, their individual distinctiveness respected and preserved.'*
- 2.7. The strategy is structured around five key priorities which clearly demonstrate the organisation's level of ambition and intent to deal with key challenges:
- 1. A vibrant and sustainable economy**
 - 2. Better opportunities for children and young people**
 - 3. Healthy, fulfilling and independent lives**
 - 4. Strong, engaged and inclusive communities**
 - 5. A greener, more resilient future**
- 2.8. Our ongoing service transformation programmes collectively are intended to enable us to improve services and manage demand, making the Council more effective and efficient.
- 2.9. On 8 December 2022, Norfolk County Council and Government signed a **County Deal for Norfolk**. Devolution offers a generational opportunity to unlock significant long-term funding and gain greater freedom to decide how best to meet local needs and create new opportunities for the people who live

and work in Norfolk. Some decisions and funding previously controlled in Westminster will now be decided by Norfolk, for Norfolk.

2.10. If agreed, a Deal for Norfolk will mean that, from 2024 onwards, we can:

- target funding and resources to Norfolk's own priorities, with a new investment fund of £20m per year for 30 years
- unlock housing and employment sites with an injection of £12.9m capital funding in this Spending Review period and new powers to drive regeneration, housing and development priorities
- invest in the skills we know we need, with devolution of the adult education budget and input into the new Local Skills Improvement Plans
- invest in local transport planning and consolidate transport budgets to direct funding to better meet our local needs and priorities
- strengthen the local business voice to inform local decision making and strategic economic planning through the future integration of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership
- have a council leader who is directly elected by the public
- raise our influence regionally and nationally, enabling our voice to be better heard by Government to shape future policies and funding decisions for the benefit of our County

2.11. This agreement would be the first step in a process of further devolution and will pave the way for future conversations as part of an ongoing dialogue; with the experience from other devolution areas showing that initial deals can open the door to receiving further powers, funding, and influence.

3. Financial Context – Government Funding

3.1. Collectively the Spending Review 2021, Autumn Budget 2022 and DLUHC Policy Statement provided indications of the medium term financial envelope within which local authorities will operate for 2024-25, but the Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2023-24 itself only set out funding allocations for one year (2023-24). The failure to publish full medium term funding forecasts is disappointing and impacts on the Council's ability to plan over the longer term. The further significant delay to long awaited funding reforms (until at least 2025-26 and potentially later), alongside the absence of any detail at this stage about the likely terms of reference for this funding review, only serves to add further uncertainty to the Council's financial planning and associated forecasts.

3.2. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's 2023 Spring Budget on 15 March 2023, but this did not include further significant policy announcements in terms of local government funding, which would impact on the budget position. As such, the Council currently has no concrete information to inform estimates of government funding levels for the 2024-25

Budget planning although the working assumption is that there will be some form of rollover settlement announced for 2024-25.

3.3. Additional social care funding was announced at the Autumn Statement 2022 and confirmed in the Local Government Finance Settlement. The announcements at national level included:

- Delaying charging reform: £1.265 billion in 2023-24 and £1.877 billion in 2024-25 will be distributed to local authorities through the Social Care Grant for adult and children's social care. This is in addition to the existing Social Care Grant. Government is continuing to equalise against the adult social care precept.
- New grant funding: £600 million will be distributed in 2023-24 and £1 billion in 2024-25 through the Better Care Fund to "get people out of hospital on time into care settings, freeing up NHS beds for those who need them." The funding is split 50:50 between the DLUHC Local Government DEL (departmental expenditure limit) and the Department for Health and Social Care DEL.
- New grant funding: £400 million in 2023-24 and £683 million in 2024-25 will be distributed through a grant ringfenced for adult social care which will also help to support capacity and discharge.
- Funding for adult social care retains £162 million per year of Fair Cost of Care funding and its distribution.
- There will be reporting requirements on the new Adult Social Care Grant and the Better Care Fund regarding performance and use of funding to deliver tangible improvements against the following objectives: discharge delays, social care waiting times, low fee rates and workforce pressures in the adult social care sector.
- A subsequent announcement in August 2023 advised of Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund: Workforce Fund, worth £570 million over 2023/24 and 2024/25. It makes extra in-year resource available to further boost capacity, allowing councils to support the adult social care workforce, including on pay. The new funding will be worth an additional £365 million in 2023/24.

3.4. The next fiscal event will be the Autumn Statement 2023. Although this may provide further details of Government planning including an insight into local government funding levels and (potentially) any changes to the council tax referendum threshold for 2024-25, further detail about local authority funding will not be available until the Local Government Provisional Settlement for 2024-25. The outcome of any national funding announcements that have potentially significant impacts on the 2024-25 Budget position will be reported

to Cabinet in January as part of 2024-25 Budget setting or to an earlier meeting of Cabinet if necessary.

4. Medium Term Financial Strategy and assumptions

4.1. At the time of setting the Medium Term Financial Strategy in February 2023, the Council adopted the following key assumptions:

- A balanced outturn position for 2022-23 and successful delivery of all existing planned savings proposed and included for 2023-24.
- Government funding rollover into 2024-25, including Settlement Funding (RSG, business rates), Rural Services Delivery Grant, Social Care Grant, Better Care Fund / improved Better Care Fund, Public Health Grant and the “2023-24 Services Grant”.
- Cost pressures for 2024-25 including:
 - 4% for pay inflation in 2024-25.
 - Price inflation of £12.5m including £7.0m in Adult Social Care and £3.2m Children’s Services. It should be noted that the MTFS assumed a material reduction in inflationary pressures compared to the level provided for in the 2023-24 Budget.
 - Demographic growth pressures including £5.5m relating to Adults demographic growth, £9.5m Children’s Services demographic growth (including £2.5m Home to School transport pressures), and £2.0m relating to waste tonnages.
 - £25m held centrally as provision for anticipated service growth in 2024-25.
 - Assumed increases in council tax of 4.99% in 2024-25 including 2.00% for the Adult Social Care precept.

4.2. A number of these assumptions now need to be revisited as described more fully in section 8 of this report. The gap based on these assumptions reflected:

Table 2: Updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
<u>Growth Pressures</u>					
Economic and inflationary	25.471	22.737	23.293	24.495	95.996
Legislative requirements	6.760	-0.200	0.000	0.000	6.560
Demand and demographic	42.150	37.150	37.010	11.000	172.310
Policy decisions	0.776	-1.543	2.078	0.000	1.311
Funding decreases	0.628	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.628
<u>Savings and funding increases</u>					
Identified savings	6.197	-0.669	-2.285	0.000	3.243
Funding increases	-8.352	0.000	0.000	0.000	-8.352
Council tax changes	-27.414	-20.949	-16.316	-16.807	-81.486
Forecast Gap (Surplus)/Deficit	46.216	36.526	43.781	18.689	145.212

4.3. The MTFS includes substantial existing savings to be delivered of £59.703m for 2023-24, and any non-delivery will need to be addressed in 2024-25. For 2024-25, the MTFS also assumes the reversal of one-off savings from 2023-24 resulting in an overall pressure of £6.197m from savings brought forward into 2024-25 planning. These break down as shown in the table below. New proposals set out in this report are in addition to these existing savings assumptions.

Table 3: Existing MTFS savings planned for 2023-24 to 2026-27 by Department

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2023-27
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Services	-28.040	2.700	-2.500	-2.000	-29.840
Children's Services	-12.517	0.088	0.050	0.000	-12.379
Community and Environmental Services	-10.904	2.819	0.570	-0.045	-7.560
Strategy and Transformation	-2.542	0.050	1.571	0.000	-0.921
Finance	-5.700	0.540	-0.360	-0.240	-5.760
Savings total	-59.703	6.197	-0.669	-2.285	-56.460

4.4. The forecast gap is kept under continuous review through the Budget process. However, it is not proposed to update the forecast budget pressures from the MTFS position at this point, reflecting the wider uncertainty about local authority finances, the lack of government funding announcements, and the need for updated forecasts for local income streams including council tax and business rates.

4.5. It is nevertheless important to note that as at October 2023, further significant revenue budget pressures are beginning to emerge in relation to items such as pay and price market pressures in Adult and Children's Services, pressures from the Fire and Rescue Service including the Fire pay award, inflationary pressures in areas like Highways Winter Maintenance, and interest payable costs. Further details of these are provided in Section 8. The cost pressures position will continue to be kept under review as the budget process progresses, however there is likely to be no residual budget from the £25m held centrally as provision for anticipated service growth to contribute to closing the 2024-25 budget gap. This overall position reflects the fact that fundamentally local authorities continue to face a growing shortfall between funding and service pressures, which is caused in large part by a combination of inflation, demographic changes, unfunded burdens, policy decisions, and the needs of vulnerable social care users becoming increasingly complex. The detailed allocation of the £25m to meet identified service pressures is underway as part of the budget setting process and will be reported to Cabinet in January 2024.

5. New proposals for Cabinet consideration October 2023

5.1. Work has been undertaken over the summer in order to develop savings proposals to contribute to closing the 2024-25 Budget gap. These new proposals total £26.485m and are summarised in the table below.

Table 4: New saving proposals summarised by Department

	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
Adult Social Services	-14.228	0.500	-2.900	-3.100	-19.728
Children's Services	-4.842	-5.769	-7.449	-5.703	-23.763
Community and Environmental Services	-5.505	-2.158	2.205	0.380	-5.078
Strategy and Transformation	-0.910	-0.010	0.000	0.000	-0.920
Finance	-1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-1.000
	-26.485	-7.437	-8.144	-8.423	-50.489

5.2. The following table provides further details of these proposals which are recommended for inclusion in the 2024-25 Budget planning, subject to the outcomes of EQIA and public consultation, which will collectively inform Cabinet's recommendations on the full Budget package in January 2024, and Full Council decision-making on the Budget in February 2024.

Table 5: Detailed Budget savings proposals 2024-25

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425ASS001	Review contracts providing respite for adults with learning disabilities and identify a more cost effective and efficient way of delivering this service.	-0.250	-0.250			-0.500
S2425ASS002	Shifting our payments for 1:1 care in Residential Care to being based on actual delivery rather than commitment basis	-0.100				-0.100
S2425ASS003	Reduction in budget for a historic pension scheme based on people exiting the scheme over time.	-0.050				-0.050
S2425ASS004	One-off release of reserves to offset budget pressures.	-3.000	3.000			0.000
S2425ASS005	Plans to build 2,800 units of extra care housing for older adults. This proposal is aimed at increasing independence and making savings by reducing demand for residential care.	1.100	-1.000	-1.700	-2.000	-3.600
S2425ASS006	Plans to provide 183 units of supported housing for young adults. This proposal is aimed at increasing independence and making savings by reducing demand for residential care.	-0.500	-1.100	-1.200	-1.100	-3.900
S2425ASS007	Supporting more people through an enhanced reablement service that prevents, reduces and delays the need for ongoing care	-1.500				-1.500
S2425ASS008	Reduce purchasing of short-term residential care, by focusing on more independent outcomes following hospital discharge.	-1.000				-1.000

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425ASS009	A programme of work based on data designed to support people earlier and connect them to services and support in their communities. The saving would be from prevention and early intervention (Connecting Communities additionality)	-4.000				-4.000
S2425ASS010	Expand the Falls Pilot to promote prevention and early intervention with a larger cohort of people at risk of falls.	-0.050	-0.150			-0.200
S2425ASS011	Investment in additional staffing to promote earlier intervention and maximise independence amongst young people with additional needs.	-0.250				-0.250
S2425ASS012	Use grant funding to replace NCC budget.	-2.128				-2.128
S2425ASS013	Potential use of additional reserves, including Public Health reserves.	-1.000	1.000			0.000
S2425ASS014	Use digital technology to streamline services and make productivity and efficiency savings across priority areas for Adult Social Care.	-1.000				-1.000
S2425ASS016	Delivering improved choice and independent outcomes for those with Mental Health needs.	-0.500	-1.000			-1.500
S2425CS001	Prevention, early intervention and effective social care - helping families stay together and ensuring fewer children in care: Reducing demand for social care intervention through earlier help and prevention.	-0.642	-1.285	-1.285	-1.285	-4.497
S2425CS002	Prevention, early intervention and effective social care - helping families stay together and ensuring fewer children in care: New Roads approach to help children		-0.125	-0.250	-0.500	-0.875

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
	and young people with neurodevelopmental disabilities and enable them to remain living within their families.					
S2425CS003	Transforming the Care Market and creating the capacity that we need: Expansion of in-house fostering capacity through a whole-Council and whole-County focus on carer recruitment and retention, ensuring we have sufficient foster carers to avoid the use of other, more costly, care arrangements where they do not provide better outcomes.	-0.378	-1.611	-1.546	-0.783	-4.318
S2425CS004	Transforming the Care Market and creating the capacity that we need: Reshaping our in-house residential care provision to successfully support the highest needs young people and to support positive 'move on' to family-based care as early as possible	-1.067	-0.973	-1.043	-0.210	-3.293
S2425CS005	Inclusion: More primary aged children with SEND can travel independently by adapting the Travel Independence Travel Across Nation (TITAN) programme.	-0.125	-0.125	-0.125	-0.125	-0.500
S2425CS006	Inclusion: Ongoing focus on efficient delivery of Home to School Transport through maximising travel independence wherever appropriate and possible.	-0.250	-0.100	-0.100		-0.450
S2425CS007	Local First Inclusion: Creation of additional specialist provision closer to home resulting in children needing to travel less far	-0.750	-0.500	-0.500	-0.500	-2.250
S2425CS008	Local First Inclusion: More children supported in mainstream schools preventing the need to travel to specialist schools.		-1.550	-2.300	-2.300	-6.150

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425CS009	Ongoing focus on efficient commissioning of complex care placements.	-0.100				-0.100
S2425CS010	Efficient commissioning of clinical training required for some families. Training delivered in partnership with Norfolk Community Health & Care (NCH&C).	-0.030				-0.030
S2425CS011	Reshaping our system support for learning and education aligned to the evolving role of the local authority and creation of a self-improving education system	-0.375	-0.375	-0.175		-0.925
S2425CS012	One-off usage of reserves earmarked to contribute to invest-to-save funding. This saving has a corresponding pressure in 2025-26 ensuring invest-to-save funding continues.	-1.000	1.000			0.000
S2425CS013	Prevention, early intervention and effective social care - helping families stay together and ensuring fewer children in care: Reduced social care placement and support costs through improved the timeliness of court decisions.	-0.125	-0.125	-0.125		-0.375
S2425CES001	Small scale efficiency improvements within Norfolk Fire and Rescue service (NFRS) that will not affect the front-line service.	-0.040				-0.040
S2425CES002	Review the management of the NFRS vehicle maintenance contract currently delivered by Norse to ensure best value.		-0.200			-0.200
S2425CES004	Reintroduce overdue charges for adults in libraries (charges were suspended during the Covid 19 pandemic).	-0.045				-0.045

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425CES005	Remove vacant Open Library Manager post (0.5fte).	-0.015				-0.015
S2425CES006	To capitalise a portion of the Executive Director post salary - 20% (to be funded from existing capital allocation).	-0.040				-0.040
S2425CES007	Remove vacant post from within the Business Support Operations team.	-0.025				-0.025
S2425CES008	Enable digital fund raising online for our libraries.	-0.020				-0.020
S2425CES009	Review highway fees and compare to those charged by neighbouring authorities, then introduce new or reviewed fees, where possible, for external customers.	-0.050	-0.025	-0.025		-0.100
S2425CES010	Review design recharge fees (BCIS 10% increase in rates from 1/4/23) and benchmark against neighbouring authorities. Introduce new or reviewed fees where possible for internal and external customers.	-0.200	-0.150	-0.150		-0.500
S2425CES011	Capitalise £0.050m of the £1.5m revenue budget from the Flood Reserve Fund. Currently £0.5m is capitalised annually.	-0.050		0.050		0.000
S2425CES012	Increase capital funding of the Norse Local Management Overhead (LMO) in the same proportions as the split of direct activity between revenue and capital.	-0.100				-0.100
S2425CES013	Further increase Area recharge budgets.	-0.100				-0.100
S2425CES014	Freeze third party delegated grass cutting rate as it received 13.4% this year. Move away from RPI increase for new applicants.	-0.030				-0.030

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425CES015	Review the level of permits NCC process in line with the permit scheme and ensure full cost recovery.	-0.250	-0.100	-0.050		-0.400
S2425CES016	Waste and recycling levels have reduced following the increase during Covid 19 due to the effects of behaviour change. A slow down in growth has been observed from Q3 2021-22 which has continued.	-0.500				-0.500
S2425CES017	Recycling credits review of assumed growth has allowed for a reduction from what has currently been factored into the medium term financial plan.	-0.275				-0.275
S2425CES018	Increase trade waste charges in recycling centres.	-0.030				-0.030
S2425CES019	Increased income generated from reuse items sold at recycling centres.	-0.070				-0.070
S2425CES020	Income generated by selling some of the materials deposited at recycling centres.	-0.075				-0.075
S2425CES021	Pay as you throw annual index price uplift at recycling centres (*will be impacted by proposed new legislation).	-0.030				-0.030
S2425CES022	Refine existing approach to trade waste recharges to district councils.	-0.010				-0.010
S2425CES023	Introduce charging to internal and external customers for all aspects of Lead Local Flood Authorities advice.	-0.005	-0.005			-0.010
S2425CES024	Cease Transport for Norwich advisory committee meetings to achieve a cost saving by reducing time spent preparing, reviewing and publishing reports.	-0.005				-0.005
S2425CES025	Explore with South Norfolk District Council and Broadland District Council on whether their restrictions on	-0.045	-0.015			-0.060

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
	roundabout sponsorship can be lifted to generate additional income.					
S2425CES026	Reduce cleaning specifications across NCC offices (County Hall, Priory and Havenbridge).	-0.100				-0.100
S2425CES027	Reduce Grounds maintenance at County Hall.	-0.010				-0.010
S2425CES028	Reduction of expenditure with outsourced provider within Corporate Property service.	-0.400				-0.400
S2425CES030	Relocation of Havenbridge House staff and functions to former Great Yarmouth library.	-0.200				-0.200
S2425CES031	Relocation of Norman House staff to Shrublands.	-0.028				-0.028
S2425CES032	Rationalisation of Breckland House occupancy in Thetford.	-0.020				-0.020
S2425CES033	Rationalisation of occupancy at Wymondham Gateway.	-0.010				-0.010
S2425CES034	Efficiency improvements to reduce cost codes and processing of invoices and recharges.		-0.020			-0.020
S2425CES035	Alternative delivery of security / vacant building management.	-0.010				-0.010
S2425CES036	Increase income generated from County Farms.	-0.160				-0.160
S2425CES038	Defer Environmental Policy revenue budget uplift to 2024-25. Working closely with Suffolk CC on this important programme to enable efficiencies.	-0.150	0.150			0.000
S2425CES039	Arts Service - further reduction of the Council's strategic arts grants (Reduction on the Council's ability to lever in substantial external funding from DCMS, Arts Council England, etc.).	-0.015				-0.015

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425CES040	Further increases in fees income generated by our Planning teams.	-0.018				-0.018
S2425CES041	Fundraising and new events income generated by the Norfolk Records Office.	-0.015				-0.015
S2425CES042	The 2024-25 business rates pool to contribute in full towards savings. Decision on pooling will be taken in Autumn 2023.		-2.600	2.600		0.000
S2425CES043	Utilisation of business rates pool for 2023-24 to fund 2024-25 growth for Local Transport Plan (£0.300m) and Transport for Norwich (£0.200m).	-0.500	0.500			0.000
S2425CES044	Holding of vacant posts and delayed recruitment to generate one-off saving within staff costs	-0.070	0.070			0.000
S2425CES046	Reduce staff learning and development budget across the department.	-0.015				-0.015
S2425CES047	One-off reversal of business as usual budget growth across the Communities, Information and Learning service.	-0.039	0.039			0.000
S2425CES048	One-off streetlighting saving which represents the in-year maintenance cost saving for those lights being replaced.	-0.040	0.040			0.000
S2425CES049	Increased recharge for Highways Asset & Capital Programme team.	-0.100				-0.100
S2425CES050	Increased use of Commuted Sums for 3 years which are applied to the highways revenue maintenance fund each year to support the maintenance of the highways asset.	-0.300			0.300	0.000

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425CES052	Moving Traffic Offences - scheme implementation - Following the government devolving powers, moving traffic offences in Norfolk are now the responsibility of the Council. The scheme will go live this autumn, and following an initial period, the scheme is likely to generate a small income from 24/25. This also includes bus lane enforcement transferred from the City Council in 2023.	-0.050	-0.050			-0.100
S2425CES053	Moving Traffic Offences - scheme expansion - Following the government devolving powers, moving traffic offences in Norfolk are now the responsibility of the Council. The scheme will go live in autumn 2023, and there is the option of adding more sites for enforcement in 24/25 and then in subsequent years. This represents the projected income from this scheme.		-0.100	-0.050		-0.150
S2425CES054	A series of new on-street electric vehicle charging points will go live in Norwich in 23/24. This contract has an income revenue share with the Council.	-0.020	-0.020			-0.040
S2425CES055	The Council's premium for its annual insurance policy within Highways has recently reduced. This figure represents the current annual saving.	-0.150				-0.150
S2425CES056	Civil Parking Enforcement - Further increased income and reprofiling as more on-street parking schemes are rolled out	-0.100	-0.302	-0.300	0.100	-0.602
S2425CES057	One-off use of Highways and Transport reserves	-0.250	0.250			0.000
S2425CES058	One-off use of Waste reserves	-0.250	0.250			0.000
S2425CES062	Increased income to the Council from road closure applications	-0.150		0.150		0.000

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425CES064	Planning - additional fee income from reviewing the approach to planning applications and internal development work	-0.025				-0.025
S2425CES065	Reduce Local Transport Plan growth bid	-0.120	0.120			0.000
S2425CES066	Use of Reserves - Utilise reserves from Kickstart programme (now closed)	-0.030	0.030			0.000
S2425CES067	Increase fees charged to developers for Section 38 road adoption agreements.	-0.050				-0.050
S2425CES068	Align Scottow income budget with most recent actual rental income forecasts	-0.100				-0.100
S2425CES069	Further increase rent charged by Scottow over and above the amounts currently factored into the medium term financial plan.		-0.020	-0.020	-0.020	-0.060
S2425S&T001	Democratic Services new income stream from citizenship service	-0.010				-0.010
S2425S&T002	Insight & Analytics team Strategic Review efficiency savings from restructure	-0.320				-0.320
S2425S&T003	HR Strategic Review savings from ending temporary and vacant posts	-0.100				-0.100
S2425S&T004	Democratic Services savings from reduction of Chairman's functions budget and executive assistant support	-0.020	-0.010			-0.030
S2425S&T005	Digital Services to reduce spend on application systems through contract management	-0.360				-0.360

Dept	Saving Proposal	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	Total £m
S2425S&T006	Digital Services to reduce spend on network services through contract management	-0.100				-0.100
S2425FIN001	Review interest receivable budgets for updated cash balance forecasts and interest rates forecast to be achievable 2024-25.	-1.000				-1.000
		-26.485	-7.437	-8.144	-8.423	-50.489

5.3. All proposals will be subject to consultation and further validation work to ensure that they are fully robust and deliverable prior to being included in the Budget presented to Full Council for consideration in February 2024. At this stage, the following proposal has been identified as requiring specific public consultation:

- Review contracts providing respite for adults with learning disabilities and identify a more cost effective and efficient way of delivering this service

5.4. For the avoidance of doubt, no final decisions on the implementation of proposals will be made until February 2024 when the County Council considers the Cabinet's proposed Budget for 2024-25, including the findings of public consultation and equality impact assessments.

6. Council tax and Adult Social Care precept

- 6.1. As set out above, the MTFS approved by Full Council in February 2023 assumes a council tax increase of 4.99% (2.99% general council tax and 2.00% Adult Social Care precept). For 2023-24 the Government announced a core council tax referendum principle of 3% and an additional 2% adult social care precept. The Policy Statement also indicates that the same principles will be applied for 2024-25. However the referendum threshold is formally reviewed and set annually, and the Government has not at this stage confirmed the referendum threshold for 2024-25.
- 6.2. In this context it also remains the case that Government's approach to the funding of local authorities in recent years has been predicated on an assumption that councils will increase council tax by the referendum limit, and that average levels of tax base growth will be experienced. This broad expectation for councils to absorb their own growth pressures has been reiterated in the Plan for Health and Social Care. A decision to increase council tax by less than the referendum threshold therefore results in the Council having lower levels of funding than Government would expect.
- 6.3. Every 1% change in council tax would equate to approximately £4.9m of additional income (reduced gap) or pressure (increased gap). In the Policy Statement, Government strongly indicated that the referendum threshold for 2024-25 would be maintained at 5%, and this assumption has been used within the Council's budget planning. **The Section 151 Officer anticipates recommending that Members agree a council tax increase of 4.99%, which is within the referendum threshold and will be a key element of setting a balanced 2024-25 Budget and establishing a robust MTFS position.** The level of council tax will therefore be a key part of the 2024-25 Budget setting discussions, and this report recommends that Cabinet seek to retain maximum flexibility by undertaking public consultation on the full range of options currently available for 2024-25. In the event that Government were to increase the threshold above 5%, this would be reviewed in the context of the overall budget position.
- 6.4. The anticipated pressures and risks within the current budget planning position are significant, and unless these are mitigated by additional savings or material new government funding, the Director of Strategic Finance considers that the Council will have very limited opportunity to vary these assumptions. In the event that the Government offered the discretion for larger increases in council tax, or further increases in the Adult Social Care precept, this would be the recommendation of the Section 151 Officer in order to ensure that the council's financial position remains robust and sustainable. This judgement reflects:
- the level of emerging service pressures balanced against the quantum of saving proposals identified to date, and the difficulties experienced in identifying sustainable ongoing savings within some demand-led services;

- the utilisation of reserves and provisions to deliver a balanced monitoring position in the current year, 2023-24;
- consideration of the robustness of the Council's overall 2024-25 budget;
- the risks for the longer term financial position, and in particular the need to ensure that a resilient budget can be set in future years,
- the reliance on one-off measures to support both the current year 2023-24 Budget and in the emerging 2024-25 Budget which will need to be addressed over the MTFS.
- the considerable remaining uncertainty around risks, funding and cost pressures in 2024-25 and beyond.

6.5. The precise final level of any change in council tax remains a matter for Full Council based on the recommendation of Cabinet and as such will be confirmed in February 2024 as part of the annual Member decision making process on the Budget.

7. Impact of the Proposals

7.1. This paper sets out details of progress in the Council's Budget planning process for 2024-25 and in particular includes further saving proposals which are expected to form part of the Council's 2024-25 Budget, subject to consideration of the outcomes of public consultation and EQIA, which this report will initiate. The proposals in this report take into account the fact that significant risks and uncertainties remain. The proposals in this report are therefore intended to:

- provide a robust basis for budget planning and a significant contribution towards closing the budget gap forecast for 2024-25;
- set the context for public consultation on and equality impact assessments of the 2024-25 Budget proposals;
- provide an opportunity for Cabinet to comment on and provide guidance about the departmental saving proposals and emerging pressures;
- provide Cabinet with the latest details about the continuing significant uncertainty around local authority funding (including funding reform);
- provide an update on the risks identified to date for the 2024-25 budget process; and
- determine the next steps which will ultimately contribute to the Council setting a balanced budget for 2024-25.

8. Risks to Budget and MTFS position

8.1. Since the development of the 2023-24 Budget and MTFS in February 2023, a number of further significant risks have emerged which will impact upon both the 2023-24 and 2024-25 budget position. At this point, these have **not** been reflected within Departmental service targets for 2024-25 as they remain subject to significant uncertainty.

8.2. Key risks include:

- **2023-24 forecast outturn** – The monitoring position for 2023-24, reported elsewhere on this agenda, currently indicates a balanced outturn position as at August 2023, period 5. This includes underlying service overspends in part offset by utilisation of reserves and provisions to achieve a balanced outturn. Any service overspends against the 2023-24 Budget will need to be addressed (to the extent it is an ongoing issue) in 2024-25.
- **Reversal of savings** – The extent to which planned 2023-24 savings are delivered in a sustainable ongoing manner will have a material impact on the level of gap that ultimately needs to be addressed for the 2024-25 Budget. Historical trends are that approximately 15% of budgeted savings are not delivered in year as reported to Cabinet at outturn. While many of these relate to timing differences (delay in achieving planned savings), a smaller proportion require reversal each year as part of the budget process. The level of savings in the 2023-24 Budget is materially higher than the trend for previous years, at £59.7m. Reversing 5% of savings would equate to a pressure of approximately £3m.
- **Inflation (pay)** – The employers' latest pay offer for 2023-24 is a flat rate £1,925 increase for employees up to scale L and a 3.88% increase for employees above scale L. This is now assumed to be the minimum outcome and can be broadly accommodated within the provision already made as part of 2023-24 Budget setting. However, any award over this amount would result in a pressure above the amount provided for at the time of setting the 2023-24 Budget and would represent both an in-year (2023-24) issue and an additional pressure to be addressed in 2024-25 Budget setting. There is in addition very significant uncertainty about the adequacy of assumptions about pay increases for 2024-25 onwards (currently 4% assumed in 2024-25 and 3% in future years), which appear potentially insufficient in the context of the wider inflationary pressures being experienced. Every 1% increase in pay inflation assumed equates to a further cost pressure of approximately £3m.
- **Inflation (non-pay)** – The adequacy of assumptions about inflation in the MTFS position need to be re-examined. Inflation in 2023-24 is above the level assumed at the time of Budget setting and remains persistently high. Forecast inflationary pressures for 2024-25 will need to be addressed in budget plans. This will have an impact across a number of budget lines, particularly where contracts are pegged to specific rates (i.e. CPI/RPI at a particular date). Detailed work over the autumn will provide greater clarity about the scale of these pressures but they may well contribute to an increase in the 2024-25 gap.
- **Interest rates** – At its meeting of 21 September 2023, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee held the Bank's base rate at 5.25%, the highest level since February 2008. It appears likely that rates will persist at these higher than usual levels in the short to medium term. Interest payable budget lines will be reviewed throughout the budget setting process, any additional cost of borrowing pressures will need to be addressed in 2024-25 budget setting.

- **Pay and Price Market pressures** – further significant revenue budget pressures are beginning to emerge in relation to items such as pay and price market pressures in Adult and Children’s Services. Uplifts are materially driven by wage inflation and wider inflation (measured by proxy via National Living Wage (NLW) and Consumer Price Index). The Government has not yet confirmed what the April 2024 NLW might look like, but if the average increase of the last three years of 7% is seen, additional budget pressures will need to be provided for.
- **Service growth** - At this stage there remains a risk that the £25m set aside for service pressures may be insufficient. This will be kept under review as part of the budget setting process and will be reported to Cabinet in January 2024.
- **Adult Social Care reform** – There are two financially material aspects of the proposed reforms. The first relates to the changing of the policy in regards to what a person may be assessed to contribute towards their care costs. The second aspect relates to the care market and a requirement to undertake a Fair Cost of Care (FCoC) exercise with the production of an interlinked Market Sustainability Plan. Both of these aspects have been delayed by Government until at least October 2025. In addition, the national funding earmarked to fund these elements of reform have been recycled into Social Care for broader purposes. Therefore whilst we continue to work towards the implementation of reform, we await clarity from Government about the financial implications and thus it still remains a significant uncertainty in our budget planning.
- **Dedicated Schools Grant deficit recovery** – During 2022-23, Norfolk worked intensively with the DfE and their appointed financial and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Advisors as part of the Safety Valve programme to develop DSG recovery plan that would result in Norfolk achieving an in-year balanced budget and enabling the cumulative deficit to be addressed. This resulted in a Safety Valve agreement with the DfE where the DfE will contribute £70m towards the repayment of the cumulative deficit by 2028-29 (first instalment of £28m received at the end of 2022-23) and NCC agreed to make an annual contribution of £5.5m pa that was included in the 2023-24 budget. Norfolk has commenced the implementation of ‘Local First Inclusion’ which is a complex programme to deliver the DSG recovery plan in line with the Safety Valve agreement covering the period 2023-29, with tri-annual reporting to the DfE. The latest forecast DSG Reserve is based on the latest modelling of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Recovery Plan after the 2022-23 outturn and early data, including amendments for the timing of opening of new provision previously estimated. An in-year deficit of c. £26.869m is forecast, in £1.721m above the budgeted deficit of £25.149m, which is partially offset by contributions from NCC and DfE in line with the Safety Valve agreement of (£5.5m) and (£6m) respectively. This will increase the DSG Reserve to £61.247m by 31 March 2024 due to the invest to save element of the plan that will deliver significant savings (and subsequently a balanced in-year budget) in future years. It should be noted that this is an early forecast before the new academic year in September when there can be significant changes to placements.

- **Government funding announcements and associated assumptions**

- The MTFS has made assumptions about the continuation of certain elements of the 2023-24 funding settlement. If these allocations are not maintained in the 2024-25 settlement, it will further increase the 2024-25 gap position.
- There remains significant uncertainty about the Fair Funding Review (and more generally) the 2024-25 settlement as described elsewhere in this report. The Fair Funding Review has been repeatedly delayed and is likely to be dependent on the priorities of any new Government following the 2024 General Election. It is quite possible that reforms will not be brought forward until 2026-27. Regardless of progress on Fair Funding, it is unlikely that there will be any certainty about the 2024-25 Provisional Settlement until mid-December at best.
- There remains considerable uncertainty around the progress and intentions of Government for Adult Social Care grant funding and reform. The MTFS position for 2024-25 assumes an estimated £15m+ of additional Social Care Grant funding in 2024-25 (as indicated, but not confirmed, by the DLUHC Policy Statement published late 2022). Two risks attach to this:
 - The grant funding ultimately allocated may not be at the level forecast.
 - And / or grant funding may be provided with additional duties or responsibilities which will require additional (offsetting) growth to be provided within the Adult Social Care budget. Currently no additional burdens are assumed against this funding.

8.3. The sensitivity analysis shown in the table below provides an indication of the potential impact of some of these changes on the overall Budget position.

Table 6: Sensitivity analysis 2024-25 Budget

Change	Impact £m
Additional income from scope to raise Adult Social Care Precept by further 1%	-4.900
Potential pressure from 2023-24 savings (assuming 15% non-delivery)	9.000
Potential pressure from 2024-25 planned savings feasibility review (assuming 15% unachievable)	4.000
Potential pressure from change in tax base growth +/-1%	+/-4.900
Impact of varying pay award assumptions +/- 1%	+/-3.000

8.4. As set out elsewhere in this report, it is not proposed to amend the budget gap targets at this stage. **It remains critical that further robust, achievable, and recurring saving proposals are brought forward in order to deliver the originally identified target of £46m.** However, although an extremely high level of uncertainty remains, based on the currently available information it is anticipated that the additional pressures

emerging (i.e. over and above the existing £46m gap) can be mitigated through a range of measures including further savings, improved business rates income and inflationary funding increases provided in the Local Government Finance Settlement, and other corporate finance options. These are all being explored and will be deployed to the fullest extent possible to support the Council in setting a balanced Budget for 2024-25. Additional certainty will be provided when Government publishes details of 2024-25 funding.

9. Robustness of the Budget and compliance with the Financial Management Code

- 9.1. The Director of Strategic Finance is required by section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to report to Members if it appears that the expenditure the authority proposes to incur in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources available to it to meet that expenditure. In addition, duties under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 establish a requirement to report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculation of the precept (and therefore in agreeing the County Council's budget).
- 9.2. As a result, these duties require a professional judgement to be made by the Director of Strategic Finance as the officer ultimately responsible for the authority's finances. The Director of Strategic Finance takes a view of the robustness of the Council's budget across the whole period covered by the Medium Term Financial Strategy and this will be fully reported to Members as part of the budget setting process in February 2024.
- 9.3. At this stage of the budget setting process, and with reference to the new saving proposals developed for 2024-25 and set out in this report, the initial assessment by the Director of Strategic Finance in relation to this duty is that it will be possible to propose a balanced budget for 2024-25, but that further recurrent savings proposals need to be developed to achieve this, and significant uncertainties remain to be addressed through the remainder of the Budget process. This reflects the following key considerations and assumptions:
- The new savings proposals developed to date for 2024-25 establish a solid foundation for the development of a robust budget, but a number of key risks remain and the ability to identify savings is becoming increasingly challenging.
 - The current monitoring position for 2023-24 is forecast to achieve a balanced position by the end of the financial year.
 - Forecasts from District Councils for locally retained income from council tax (the tax base and collection fund position) and business rates have not yet been received.
 - Contingent on the details of the Local Government Finance Settlement and without additional deliverable, recurrent savings, the Director of Strategic Finance expects to recommend that a sustainable Medium Term

Financial Strategy will require an increase in line with the maximum referendum threshold for council tax and the Adult Social Care precept.

- Significant risks remain around the scale of the likely gap for 2025-26 and future years, subject to the level of one-off options required to balance the 2024-25 budget.
- The assessment of the robustness of the Budget remains highly sensitive to the detail of Government decisions about funding to be made at any fiscal events through the remainder of the year and also the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25, expected in December 2023.

9.4. In addition, the judgement takes into account the fact that work is underway to quantify and validate significant emerging pressures which will need to be included in the final Budget proposals in February 2024 where they are shown to be appropriate and unavoidable. Details of some of these pressures and risks are set out in the preceding section of the report.

9.5. Taking the above into account, the Director of Strategic Finance's current advice is that the Council needs to continue to develop the 2024-25 Budget in a way which offers flexibility to respond to changes in the wider environment and operating context. This includes a further process to identify deliverable recurrent savings for 2024-25 to meet the original target of £46m set out in June 2023. This will need to be undertaken over the course of the next few months and reported to Cabinet in January 2024. The overall Budget position will be kept under review as budget planning continues through the remainder of the year. As part of setting the 2024-25 Budget, the Director of Strategic Finance will also consider the adequacy of the overall General Fund balance, the need for a general contingency amount within the revenue budget, uncertainty about Government funding, other areas of risk including the wider economic climate, and the Council's wider value for money position.

9.6. The Council closely monitors developments across local government finance and takes account of the financial issues being reported by other authorities. At this stage, the Director of Strategic Finance's judgement is that the specific problems identified by those councils which have issued s114s to date are not replicated in Norfolk, as they relate to particular local issues for those authorities including equal pay, commercial activities, excessive levels of borrowing, or a failure to set robust budgets. However the recent spate of section 114 notices serves to highlight that there is an underlying fragility and lack of financial resilience within the wider local government sector; in other words whereas in the past councils were in a position to "weather the storm" it now takes only one or two external shocks to destabilise even well run authorities. The County Council is not immune to this overall decline in financial resilience across the whole local government sector, and continues to face significant financial and service delivery pressures and risks across all services, as set out elsewhere in this report. It is therefore critical to continue to work with partners across the sector to lobby Government for adequate and sustainable levels of funding for local government as a whole, while simultaneously pushing for a fair share of that funding for Norfolk.

9.7. As in previous years, the 2024-25 Budget needs to be prepared with reference to the Financial Management Code (the FM Code) published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The FM Code provides guidance about the principles of good and sustainable financial management, and requires authorities to demonstrate that processes are in place which satisfy these principles. It identifies risks to financial sustainability and sets out details of a framework of assurance which reflects existing successful practices across the sector. In addition, the Code establishes explicit standards of financial management, and highlights that compliance with these is the collective responsibility of elected members, the chief finance officer and the wider Corporate Board. Further details of how the Council considers it achieves compliance with the FM Code will be set out in the January Cabinet Budget report.

10. Next steps and approach to addressing the remaining gap

10.1. The overarching timetable for 2024-25 as agreed by Cabinet in June is reproduced at Appendix 1 of this report. The Council will be undertaking a further round of Budget Challenge in December to enable and inform a full suite of budget proposals to be presented to Cabinet in January 2024.

10.2. If the proposals identified in this report, totalling £26.485m, are incorporated into the budget planning process, there remains a forecast gap of approximately £20m to be addressed. Further measures to contribute to the development of a balanced budget for 2024-25 are expected to be brought forward under the following key areas:

- Ongoing scrutiny of budget pressures within 2024-25 budget planning
- Government funding announcements including the Local Government Finance Settlement and council tax referendum thresholds for 2024-25
- Review of forecast business rates income budgets
- Corporate finance options
- Third round of Budget Challenge in December 2023, to provide an opportunity to review additional specific savings proposals brought forward by services.

10.3. In the event that the next phases of the budget process fail to yield the required level of (ongoing) savings proposals, then through the autumn and winter further work will be necessary to enable the preparation of a balanced budget. This would require a range of activities including, but not limited to, the following:

- Identification of significant capital receipts that can be used to fund transformation work and/or reduce borrowing costs.
- A further material reduction in the future capital programme.
- A review of all non-essential expenditure.

- 10.4. The Government has not yet definitively confirmed the council tax referendum principles for 2024-25, including whether there will be a continuation of the adult social care (ASC) precept beyond 2024-25. The Council's current planning assumes a council tax increase of 4.99% including 2% for the ASC precept. Government will confirm the council tax referendum principles alongside the Local Government Finance Settlement, taking into account cost pressures and the overall Local Government funding package later in the year. In the event that Government allows increased flexibility for 2024-25, the Section 151 officer will consider any recommendations on the level of council tax in the context of the ability to deliver a robust and sustainable budget.

11. Proposed consultation process for 2024-25 budget

- 11.1. The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024-25 agreed in February 2023 assumed that core council tax will increase overall by 2.99%, and that the Adult Social Care precept will be increased by 2% (these referendum thresholds have not yet been confirmed for 2024-25). The report also set out that if the referendum threshold were increased in the period 2024-25 to 2026-27, 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.
- 11.2. The Government has not yet announced the referendum thresholds for 2024-25 onwards. These may be confirmed either within any technical consultation on local government funding, at a fiscal event, or as part of the Provisional Settlement. Government has historically assumed that councils will raise the maximum council tax available to them. In light of the overall financial position and pressures facing the Council, it is proposed to consult the public to understand views about a total council tax and adult social care increase of 4.99% (as per MTFs assumptions), in order to support Member decision making in February 2024. It should be noted that the level of council tax is a decision for Full Council each year; it is therefore prudent to consult on the full range of available options to inform Member decision-making. As in previous years we are inviting comments on the level of council tax through our consultation hub on Citizen Space.
- 11.3. We will publish our budget consultation, including details of all new saving proposals for 2024-25 on the Council's online consultation hub, Citizen Space. We will produce large print, downloadable and easy read versions as standard and make any consultation documents available in other formats on request.
- 11.4. As well as alerting key stakeholders to the consultation, we will promote opportunities for people to have their say on budget proposals and council tax through news releases, online publications and social media. We will also be sharing our consultation with members of the Norfolk Residents'

Panel and inviting parish councils to a webinar where they can find out more about our proposals and invite them to provide feedback.

- 11.5. Our consultation will take place in the autumn. Consultation feedback on both budget proposals and council tax will be available for Cabinet in January 2024 and Full Council in February 2024. We will make extra effort to find out the views of people who may be affected by our proposals, including people with protected characteristics.
- 11.6. We will also report on the findings of the equality impact assessments we are undertaking. For information about this please see Section 17.

12. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 12.1. After more than ten years of savings identification and delivery, and in the face of both continuing significant financial pressures and Government plans for funding reform, it is essential that the Council has a robust approach to budget setting and the identification of saving proposals. Simultaneously, it is critical to continue to engage with Government, MPs and other stakeholders to campaign for adequate and sustainable funding for Norfolk to enable the delivery of vital services to residents, businesses and visitors. In the context of economic uncertainty and in the absence of funding reform, it remains imperative that Government issues guidance on the direction of travel for reform, financial planning assumptions, and confirms funding allocations for 2024-25, as soon as possible.
- 12.2. In view of the size of the gap forecast for 2024-25, there remains a risk that the Council will be obliged to consider reductions in service levels. As such it was important for the process of developing savings proposals to have been undertaken as soon as possible to support robust engagement and public consultation. The Council's planning within the MTFS forecast is based on the position agreed in February 2023 and it is important to note that this will be kept under review throughout the remainder of the 2024-25 Budget setting process, particularly in the event that further information about funding or cost pressures becomes available. The proposals in this report do not close the entire budget gap faced by the Council for 2024-25, but they do establish a robust foundation for the Council to build on in order to develop a deliverable and balanced Budget for 2024-25.

13. Alternative Options

- 13.1. This report forms part of the framework for developing detailed saving proposals for 2024-25 and at this stage no proposals have been agreed, meaning that a range of alternative options remain open. Cabinet has the opportunity to comment on the proposals now, and will have further scope to consider them (informed by public consultation and EQIA) when making final Budget recommendations to Full Council in January 2024 (for the Full Council meeting in February 2024).

13.2. In addition, there are a number of areas where Cabinet could choose to consider different parameters for the budget setting process, such as:

- Adopting an alternative allocation of targets between directorates / services, or retaining a target corporately.
- Considering an alternative timetable within the time constraints required to develop proposals, undertake public consultation, and meet statutory deadlines for the setting of council tax.
- Establishing an alternative approach to identifying savings.
- Changing assumptions within the MTFS (including the level of council tax) and therefore varying the level of savings sought.

13.3. The planning context for the Council will be updated if further information becomes available. Final decisions about the overall shape of the 2024-25 Budget, savings, and council tax will not be made until Full Council in February 2024, when they will be informed by Local Government Finance Settlement figures, forecasts supplied by District Councils, and the findings of EQIA and public consultation activity.

13.4. The deliverability of all saving proposals will continue to be kept under review by the Section 151 Officer as further detailed implementation plans are developed and up until final budget setting proposals are presented to Cabinet in January 2024.

14. Financial Implications

14.1. Financial implications are discussed throughout this report, which sets out in particular the proposed savings which have been identified by each department to contribute to closing the 2024-25 and future year budget gap, subject to formal approval by Full Council in February 2024. It should be noted that even if all the proposals detailed in this report were to be approved, the scale of the gap is such that services will be required to identify further significant savings to be delivered against current budget levels. However, simultaneously it appears to be increasingly difficult to identify savings within statutory demand led services, and this represents a major challenge. The scope to achieve savings at the level required may also be limited by a range of factors including the impact of the cost of living on cost pressures, service delivery expectations, existing saving programmes, and the legacy of COVID-19.

14.2. The Council is legally required to set a balanced Budget annually and should plan to achieve this using a prudent set of assumptions. However, as previously set out, Members could choose to vary the allocation of indicative targets between Directorates, establish an alternative approach to identifying savings, or substitute proposals brought forward. Work to deliver additional Government funding could also have an impact on the overall budget gap to

be addressed. As a result, the budget setting process and savings targets will continue to be kept under review as budget planning progresses.

14.3. The scale of the budget gap and savings required are such that if the Council is required to deliver savings at this level there is a risk that this could result in the Council failing to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. As such the Government's response and decisions about Council funding in 2024-25 will be hugely significant. Any changes in Government funding could have a material impact on both the level of savings to be identified, and the Council's wider budget process. Government has hitherto failed to deliver the comprehensive adjustment needed in terms of the recognition of the importance and costs of providing social care, and to adequately fund local authorities to provide these and other vital services. Fundamentally there is a need for a larger quantum of funding to be provided to local government to deliver a sustainable level of funding for future years.

14.4. Major uncertainty remains about the prospects for funding reform. There is a risk that this could see resources shifted away from shire counties, in which event the Council's forecast 2024-25 gap could increase. At this point, Government has not confirmed details of the proposed approach or timescales for consultation on funding reform, although there are indications that this will not be taken forward in a way which delivers substantial funding changes and may not happen until 2026-27 at the earliest. The 2024-25 MTFS position assumes that a number of funding streams will be rolled forward from 2023-24. These assumptions remain to be confirmed and should be considered a key area of risk.

14.5. As a result of the above, the budget setting process and savings targets will be kept under review as budget planning progresses. In the event that additional budget pressures for 2024-25 emerge through budget planning, there may be a requirement to revisit the indicative saving targets.

15. Resource Implications

15.1. **Staff:** There are no direct implications arising from this report although it is likely that staffing implications may be linked to specific saving proposals as they are developed. These will be identified as they arise later in the budget planning process.

15.2. **Property:** The report includes saving proposals related to declaring surplus and ultimately disposing of sites. Services currently delivered from these sites will need to be relocated and delivered from alternative sites within the County Council's property estate. There are no other direct property implications arising from this report although existing saving plans include activities linked to property budgets and assumptions around capital receipts to be achieved.

15.3. **IT:** There are no direct IT implications arising from this report although existing saving plans include activities linked to IMT budgets. In addition,

activities planned within Business Transformation will include further work to deliver savings through activity related to digital and IT initiatives.

16. Other Implications

- 16.1. **Legal Implications:** This report is part of a process that will enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2024-25 in line with statutory requirements, including those relating to setting council tax, and undertaking public consultation.
- 16.2. **Human Rights implications:** No specific human rights implications have been identified.
- 16.3. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):** See section 17 below.
- 16.4. **Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):** N/a
- 16.5. **Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):** N/a
- 16.6. **Sustainability implications (where appropriate):** There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report although the financial implications of climate change are considerable. Existing 2023-24 budget plans include funding for activities which may have an impact on the environmental sustainability of the County Council through the delivery of the Environmental Policy. These issues were considered in more detail within the February budget report to Full Council and further details were set out in the *Net Zero and Natural Norfolk Progress Update* previously considered by Cabinet.
- 16.7. Since 2023-24 Budget setting, in [May 2023, Cabinet](#) approved the recommendation to develop a Funding Blueprint for the Climate Strategy. This will set out funding options for delivering the strategy. The blueprint is under development by officers and will be brought to Infrastructure and Development Select Committee for review in 2024.
- 16.8. In [June 2023, Cabinet](#) approved recommendations relating to “Delivering Norfolk County Council’s Net Zero Pledge: Retrofitting our buildings” and initial cost implications have been incorporated into the Capital Programme. Also in June, [Norfolk County Council’s Climate Strategy](#) was launched, setting out a comprehensive framework for how the council can best direct its powers, resources and influence in support of Norfolk’s journey towards a clean and resilient future in the face of climate change.
- 16.9. Details of financial implications of these are set out within the associated reports, and the wider budgetary implications of all of these will need to be considered for 2024-25, alongside further sustainability issues. Any associated financial implications in relation to either new 2024-25 proposals, or activities developed during 2023-24, will need to be fully

considered once such initiatives are finalised, and ultimately as part of budget setting in February 2024.

- 16.10. **Any other implications:** Significant issues, risks, assumptions and implications have been set out throughout the report.

17. Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Introduction

- 17.1. Local authorities are required by the Equality Act 2010 to give 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty when exercising public functions.

- 17.2. This means giving 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 people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it³.

- 17.3. Many local authorities summarise their efforts to give 'due regard to equality' in an '**equality impact assessment**' – because this is an accessible way to analyse the different ways a proposal might impact on people with protected characteristics.

- 17.4. If the assessment identifies any detrimental impact, this enables mitigating actions to be developed. Giving 'due regard to equality' enables informed decisions to be made that take every opportunity to minimise disadvantage.

How the Council gives due regard to equality on the budget saving proposals

- 17.5. Due regard to equality has been given to the saving proposals set out in this report. This includes ensuring that:

- The development of the proposals are compliant with the Equality Act 2010
- Information about the proposals is accessible
- Arrangements for public consultation are inclusive and accessible.

- 17.6. Following confirmation (or any changes made) by the Cabinet at this October meeting that the proposals will be taken forward for budget planning for 2024-25, further analysis in the form of equality impact assessments will take place of each proposal, to consider the impact on people with protected characteristics.

³ [The full Equality Act 2021 is available on legislation.gov.uk.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

17.7. Equality impact assessments cannot be completed until public consultation is concluded. This is because the Council must ensure that it has fully understood the impact of each proposal.

17.8. The findings of equality impact assessments will be published for consideration by the Cabinet in the Strategic and Financial Planning 2024-25 report of January 2024, and in advance of the final decision by the Full Council about the overall Budget in February 2024.

18. Risk Implications/Assessment

18.1. A number of significant risks have been identified throughout this report. Risks in respect of the MTFs were also set out within the February 2023 report to Full Council. Uncertainties continue to remain which could have an impact on the overall scale of the budget gap to be addressed in 2024-25. These include:

- The significant impacts of the “cost of living” crisis, exceptional inflationary pressures and the wider impact of the invasion of Ukraine on the economy. All of these have the potential to drive additional cost pressures (either through increased demand for services, or as a result of the increased price of delivering service provision) and may also lead to reductions in overall income due to the wider economic impacts. In particular it is important to note that the MTFs approved by Full Council did not provide for the current high levels of inflation which are expected to persist through the remainder of the financial year. These inflationary pressures have the potential to impact on the Council’s budget in a range of ways:
 - Pay pressures in excess of the 4% provided for in the Council’s planning assumptions.
 - Pressures associated with increase in the National Living Wage (NLW), particularly in relation to services contracted by the Council. This has a material impact on any services commissioned whereby staff, typically care workers, are paid at, or just above, the NLW. In particular, the £400m of care services purchased by Adult Social Care, and increasingly services commissioned by Children’s Services. In addition, Children’s Services are seeing an impact upon some in-house services. In April 2023 the NLW increased from £9.50 to £10.42, an increase of £0.92 or 9.7%. We currently estimate the 2024 NLW rate required to meet this target to be in the range £10.90 to £11.43, with a central estimate of £11.16. for 2024.⁴ The government remains committed to the 2024 target, but if the economic evidence warrants it, the Low Pay Commission should advise the government to adjust the target. This emergency

⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1147845/The_National_Minimum_Wage_in_2023.pdf

- brake will ensure that the lowest-paid workers continue to see pay rises without significant risks to their employment prospects.⁵
- The higher rates of general inflation measures (CPI and RPI) will directly impact on the Council's contractual costs which are set with reference to these indicators. Government has indicated that there is limited scope within the existing spending review envelope to address these exceptional inflationary pressures. Forecasts are that inflation will return to the target 2% over the medium term but this implies a permanent increase in the Council's cost base from the current extreme rates (i.e. inflationary pressures are not being taken back out of the system by negative inflation in future).
 - Ongoing uncertainty around local government (and wider public sector finances) including:
 - the need for a long term financial settlement for local government. There remains high uncertainty about the levels of funding for 2024-25 and beyond. The Council's budget planning assumes funding will continue at a similar level.
 - It remains of major concern that Government continues to place significant reliance and expectations on locally raised income. If this trend persists, the financial pressures for 2024-25 and beyond may become unsustainable. The Government has not yet announced the council tax referendum limit for 2024-25.
 - There remains a specific risk in relation to longer term reform of local government funding and the planned funding review, in that a failure by the Government to provide adequate resources to fund local authorities could lead to a requirement for further service reductions, particularly where these result in a redistribution between authority types or geographical areas. Changing Government policies around the nature, role, responsibilities and requirements of Local Government may also represent an area of risk, as will changing expectations of the public, taxpayers and service users. The Government has not made any formal announcement about funding reform for some time and this may not be going ahead in the short to medium term.
 - linked to this are risks around delivery of reforms to local government funding including actions to deliver "Levelling Up", the funding review, the detailed implications of Adult Social Care reform, reforms to the Business Rates system, and changes to other funding streams including the New Homes Bonus.
 - In respect of Adult Social Care reform, whilst it has been materially delayed until at least October 2025, the County Councils Network has estimated that Government's proposed reforms lack sufficient funding for implementation, with a shortfall of nearly £10bn compared to Government estimates.⁶

⁵<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-minimum-wage-and-national-living-wage-low-pay-commission-remit-2023/national-living-wage-and-national-minimum-wage-low-pay-commission-remit-2023>

⁶ <https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/new-analysis-reveals-the-regional-impact-on-local-councils-of-the-governments-flagship-adult-care-reforms/>

- Further decisions about Local Government reorganisation and the progress of the County Deal.
- Risks around the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit position and successful implementation of the 'Local First Inclusion' plan to eliminate the in-year DSG deficit over the short to medium term.
- Any ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the budget in 2023-24, including in particular:
 - any ongoing cost pressures within service delivery and contracted services which have not currently been provided for;
 - future pressures on income particularly in relation to business rates and council tax; and
 - the implications of any measures implemented by Government to restore the national finances in the medium to longer term.

18.2. The Council's Corporate Risk Register provides a full description of corporate risks, including corporate level financial risks, mitigating actions and the progress made in managing the level of risk. A majority of risks, if not treated, could have significant financial consequences such as failing to generate income or to realise savings. These corporate risks include:

- RM002 – Income streams
- RM006 – Service Delivery
- RM022b – Replacement EU Funding for Economic Growth
- RM031 – NCC Funded Children's Services Overspend
- RM035 – Adverse impact of significant and abnormal levels of inflationary pressure on revenue and capital budgets

18.3. Further details of all corporate risks, including those outlined above, can be found in Appendix B of the October 2023 Risk Management report to Cabinet. There is close oversight of the Council's expenditure with monthly financial reports to Cabinet. Any emerging risks arising will continue to be identified and treated as necessary.

19. Select Committee comments

19.1. Select Committees provided commentary and input to the 2023-24 Budget process during budget development. Where relevant, any comments from that exercise have been incorporated within the budget setting approach for 2024-25.

19.2. In July 2023, Select Committees therefore again had the opportunity to provide their views about the scope for savings and the implications of 2024-25 budget setting for the service areas within their remit. Select Committees are being invited to consider all of the detailed proposals for 2024-25 in the round when they meet in November, following Cabinet decisions about the complete package of measure to be consulted on as part of this report. Any further comments from Select Committees will therefore be reported to Cabinet later in the budget setting process in order to inform final budget recommendations to Full Council.

20. Recommendations

20.1. Cabinet is recommended:

- 1. To consider and comment on the County Council's financial strategy as set out in this report and note that the Budget process is aligned to the overall policy and financial framework;**
- 2. To note that fiscal and policy decisions made by the Government in autumn 2023, may have implications for the County Council's budget planning position. The outcome of these national funding announcements, alongside the Local Government Finance Settlement, will have potentially significant impacts on the 2024-25 Budget position, which will not be fully known until later in the budget setting process.**
- 3. To consider and agree for planning purposes the latest assessment of significant areas of risk and uncertainty around emerging budget pressures for the 2024-25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy, which remain to be resolved and which may have a material impact on budget planning (section 8).**
- 4. To direct Executive Directors to identify proposals for further recurrent Departmental savings towards the original target of £46.200m agreed in June 2023, for consideration by Cabinet in January 2024 and to support final 2024-25 Budget recommendations to Full Council.**
- 5. To note that, taking into account the significant budget pressures for 2024-25, the S151 Officer anticipates recommending that the Council will need to apply the maximum council tax increase available in order to set a sustainable balanced budget for 2024-25;**
- 6. To note the responsibilities of the Director of Strategic Finance under section 114 of the Local Government Act 1988 and section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 to comment on the robustness of budget estimates as set out in section 9 and the further actions which may be required to set a balanced budget as set out in paragraph 10.3;**
- 7. To consider and agree the proposals as set out in section 5 (Table 5) to be taken forward in budget planning for 2024-25, subject to final decisions about the overall Budget in February 2024, noting the level of savings already included from the 2023-24 Budget process (Table 3);**
- 8. To agree that public consultation (as set out in section 11) and equality impact assessment (as set out in section 17) in relation to all other proposals for the 2024-25 Budget be undertaken as set out in section 11, and asking residents for their views on the level of council tax;**
- 9. To note that the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) has the delegation to undertake any staff consultation relating to specific**

proposals as required to inform and support 2024-25 Budget setting decisions in January 2024;

10. To confirm the remaining next steps in the Budget planning process for 2024-25, and the Budget planning timetable (Appendix 1); and
11. To note and thank Select Committees for their input into the Budget development process for 2024-25 in July, and to invite Select Committees to comment further on the detailed proposals set out in this report when they meet in November 2023 (section 19)

21. Background Papers

- 21.1. Background papers relevant to this report include:

[Norfolk County Council Revenue and Capital Budget 2023-24 to 2026-27, County Council 21/02/2023, agenda item 5](#)

[Norfolk County Council 2023-24 Budget Book](#)

[Financial and Strategic Planning 2024-25, Cabinet, 05/06/2023, agenda item 16](#)

Finance Monitoring Report 2023-24 P5: August 2023, Cabinet, 02/10/2023 (on this agenda)

Risk Management, Cabinet, 02/10/2023, (on this agenda)

Strategic and Financial Planning reports considered by Select Committees in July 2023 as follows:

- [Corporate Select Committee, 10/07/2023](#)
- [Infrastructure and Development Select Committee, 12/07/2023](#)
- [People and Communities Select Committee, 14/07/2023](#)

Officer Contact

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If you need this report in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Appendix 1: Budget setting timetable 2024-25

2024-25	Time frame
Cabinet review of the financial planning position for 2024-28 – including formal allocation of targets	5 June 2023
Scrutiny Committee	21 June 2023
Select Committee input to development of 2024-25 Budget – strategy	w/c 10 July 2023
Review of budget pressures and development of budget strategy and detailed savings proposals 2024-28 incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Challenge 1 (18 July 2023) – context / strategy / approach / outline proposals Budget Challenge 2 (5 September 2023) – detail and final proposals Budget Challenge 3 (12 December 2023) 	April to December 2023
Cabinet approve final proposals for public consultation	2 October 2023
Scrutiny Committee	18 October 2023
Public consultation on 2024-25 Budget proposals, council tax and adult social care precept	Late October to mid December 2023
Select Committee input to development of 2024-25 Budget – comments on specific proposals	w/c 13 November 2023
Government Autumn Statement	22 November 2023
<i>Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced including provisional council tax and precept arrangements</i>	<i>TBC December 2023</i>
Cabinet considers outcomes of service and financial planning, EQIA and consultation feedback and agrees revenue budget and capital programme recommendations to County Council	29 January 2024
Confirmation of District Council tax base and Business Rate forecasts	31 January 2024
<i>Final Local Government Finance Settlement</i>	<i>TBC January / February 2024</i>
Scrutiny Committee 2024-25 Budget scrutiny	14 February 2024
County Council agrees Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28, revenue budget, capital programme and level of council tax for 2024-25	20 February 2024

Assumed Government activity and timescales – Budget process will be informed through the year by Government announcements on the Local Government Settlement, and any progress on reforms including the Funding Review. As set out elsewhere in the report, the timing for these is currently unknown.

People and Communities Forward Work Programme, 2023-25

Item No. 12

Date	Report	Issues for consideration	Cabinet Member	Exec Director
19 January 2024	Vaping in Norfolk		Cllr Bill Borrett	Stuart Lines
	Adult Social Care Digital Strategy		Cllr Alison Thomas	Debbie Bartlett
15 March 2024	Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Norfolk		Cllr Bill Borrett	Stuart Lines
	Home to School Transport		Cllr Penny Carpenter	Sara Tough
17 May 2024				
19 July 2024				
27 September 2024				
22 November 2024				
24 January 2025				
21 March 2025				

Items to be scheduled:

- Task and finish group to consider how a code of conduct can be agreed to govern discussion of sensitive issues – **Month TBC**
- Carers Strategy – **Month TBC**
- processes in place around new foster carers and re-registration of returning foster carers – **Month TBC**