

Cabinet

Date: **Wednesday 8 May 2024**

Time: **10 am**

Venue: **Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane,
Norwich NR1 2DH**

Membership

Cllr Kay Mason Billig

Cllr Andrew Jamieson

Cllr Bill Borrett

Cllr Penny Carpenter

Cllr Margaret Dewsbury

Cllr Fabian Eagle

Cllr Jane James

Cllr Graham Plant

Cllr Alison Thomas

Cllr Eric Vardy

Role

Chair. Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance

Vice-Chair. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation

Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Advice for members of the public:

This meeting will be held in public and in person.

It will be live streamed on YouTube and members of the public may watch remotely by clicking on the following link: [Norfolk County Council YouTube](#)

We also welcome attendance in person, but public seating is limited, so if you wish to attend please indicate in advance by emailing committees@norfolk.gov.uk

Current practice for respiratory infections requests that we still ask everyone attending to maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene and, at times of high prevalence and in busy areas, please consider wearing a face covering.

Please stay at home if you are unwell, have tested positive for COVID 19, have symptoms of a respiratory infection or if you are a close contact of a positive COVID 19 case. This will help make the event safe for attendees and limit the transmission of respiratory infections including COVID-19.

A g e n d a

1 To receive any apologies.

2 Minutes

To confirm the minutes from the Cabinet Meeting held on 8 April 2024

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

5 Updates from the Chairman/Cabinet Members

6 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 on Wednesday 1 May 2024. For guidance on submitting a public question, please follow this link: [Ask a question to a committee - Norfolk County Council](#)

Any public questions received by the deadline and the responses will be published on the website from 9.30am on the day of the meeting and can be viewed by clicking this link once uploaded: [Click here to view public questions and responses](#)

7 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 on Wednesday 1 May 2024.

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| 8 Council Delivery Plan 2024-2025 and Annual Review 2023-2024 | Page 46 |
| Report by the Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation | |
| 9 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) | Page 142 |
| Report by the Chief Fire Officer | |
| 10 Climate Action Plans - Tranche 3 | Page 164 |
| Report by the Director of Strategic Finance | |
| 11 Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain and Pollinator Action Plan | Page 188 |
| Report by the Lead Director for Infrastructure | |
| 12 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and Investigatory Powers Act 2016 Annual Report | Page 223 |
| Report by the Chief Fire Officer | |
| 13 Strategic and Financial Planning 2025-26 | Page 266 |
| Report by the Director of Strategic Finance | |
| 14 Reports of the Cabinet Member and Officer Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting: | |
| To note the delegated decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting. | |

Decision by the Cabinet Member for Finance

- [Hardship Support Fund – Round 5](#)

Decision by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation

- [New Primary School at Silfield, Wymondham – Proposed use of powers](#)

[under Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016](#)

Decision by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

- [Childcare Expansion Programme and Capital Grant](#)

Decision by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

- [Constitutional Agreement to Issue a Grant Agreements for Citizens Advice Bureau Services](#)

Decision by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

- [Museum Development South East funding 2024-26](#)

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Chief Executive
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Date Agenda Published: 29 April 2024



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Cabinet
Minutes of the Meeting held on 08 April 2024
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 10am

Present:

Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Chair. Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Cllr Penny Carpenter	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
Cllr Jane James	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation
Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Deputy Cabinet Members Present

Cllr Greg Peck	Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Shelagh Gurney	Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
Cllr Lana Hemsall	Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Executive Directors Present:

Debbie Bartlett	Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Harvey Bullen	Director of Strategic Finance
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy
Kat Hulatt	Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Tom McCabe	Chief Executive
Ceri Sumner	Director of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service
Sara Tough	Executive Director of Children's Services`

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.

2 Minutes from the meeting held on 04 December 2023

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 04 March 2024 as an accurate record.

3 Declaration of Interests

- 3.1 No interests were declared.

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

- 4.1 A report had been referred to the Cabinet from Scrutiny Committee.

- 4.2 The Chair had spoken to Henry Cator, chairman of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance, who agreed with this suggestion.
- 4.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED** that the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste will write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to encourage an expedited implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

5 Update from the Chair/Cabinet Members

- 5.1 The Chair gave a statement about the Norwich Western Link:
- Since the Full Council meeting on 26 March 2024, the Chair had written to relevant Secretaries of State to see if they would support Norfolk County Council over the publication of new Natural England guidance and its impact on major infrastructure projects.
 - She had also spoken with Norfolk MPs who had written to Secretaries of State and expressed alarm on the issue.
 - The Chair had spoken to the Local Government Association and the County Council Network and alerted them to the map which showed the implications of this change for the South and Middle of England and Wales.
 - This was an issue for government to talk to Natural England about and decide how they would react to the new guidance.
 - The Council had held talks with Natural England for over a year so that a licence could be issued and would continue to do so. The best outcome being that mitigations could be put in place which would protect bats and other wildlife while ensuring that the road could be built. This would take rat running traffic off unsuitable roads, help reduce journey times and improve air quality in Norwich.
- 5.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing gave an update on malnutrition:
- A report by Future Health called Hiding in Plain Sight, Tackling Malnutrition was published in October 2023, which stated that Norfolk had the highest malnutrition rates in the country at 6.7%. This report had prompted questions about malnutrition to Cabinet and Full Council.
 - The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing had asked the Director of Public Health to ask the Norfolk County Council analytics team to analyse the findings in the report and find the actual rates of malnutrition in Norfolk and Waveney.
 - The findings in the Future Health report were estimated; the authors of the report had used the age of the population to estimate what the rates would be in Norfolk. As Norfolk had the oldest age population in the country, they estimated that Norfolk would have the highest rates of malnutrition under this definition.
 - The figure developed by Norfolk County Council was based on actual healthcare usage and showed that the rates in Norfolk were lower than the national average. The higher age of residents would indicate a higher rate would be expected, but this was not the case.
 - In childhood, causes of malnutrition were largely associated with long term conditions such as childhood cancer, cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, and congenital heart disease. Childhood malnutrition was rare, and cases were known to safeguarding agencies.

- Cases of children who were overweight and obesity were common but cases of children who were underweight was uncommon. This was supported by child weight management data which measured the height and weight of all children in reception and year six. This data showed that 0.8% and 1% of children were underweight in these year groups respectively, which was significantly lower than the national averages for both age groups.
- Local analysis showed that malnutrition was below the national average and hospital admissions for people over 75 were significantly lower than the national average.
- The percentage increase in malnutrition in Norfolk was seen to be in line with the increase seen nationally.

5.3 The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing for this factual data.

6. Public Question Time

6.1 The questions received from members of the public and responses to them are published in appendix A of these minutes.

7 Local Member Questions/Issues

7.1 The questions received from Members and responses to them are published in appendix B of these minutes.

7.2.1 Cllr Morpew asked a supplementary question:

- Cllr Morpew was disappointed that the options appraisal report was not being revisited as this meant that alternative options to the Norwich Western Link for villages to the west of Norwich were not being revisited. He felt that there was an opportunity to pause and reflect rather than blame Natural England and asked whether Cabinet re-open the options appraisal to see if an alternative can be found.

7.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport replied that options appraisals were undertaken at the beginning stage of a project when deciding which route to move forward; it was not usual to put this in place when a planning application was being submitted. There was not an option or route which would work better, and widening roads around the villages would not be viable. Widening roads in villages would also impact on wildlife.

8. Norfolk Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy 2024

8.1.1 Cabinet received the report outlining the Strategy rationale and ambitions and the results of the public consultation (which were reported to Infrastructure and Development Select Committee on 13 March 2024), and recommends Cabinet to adopt the Norfolk Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy with the proposed amendments implemented.

8.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:

- This report was taken to Infrastructure and Development Committee who agreed the strategy with no changes.

- Key delivery of the strategy was via the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan which was on the agenda at item 9.
- Norfolk County Council had a strong record in drawing down funding and this strategy would strengthen the position, help Norfolk County Council to have a higher capability rating from Highways England and ensure that the Council could continue to receive funding for highways schemes in the future.
- This strategy would provide a choice of travel for people in the County.
- The public consultation showed that most people were in support of the vision set out in the strategy. Officers took people's comments into account and made changes to the strategy where appropriate.
- The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

- 8.2 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted the importance of this strategy in ensuring that the Council could continue to secure funding.
- 8.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing was in support of the strategy; physical exercise could help prevent over 20 chronic conditions and diseases and manage stress and anxiety and this strategy would help people to have choice over how to go about their daily lives. Physical inactivity cost £900m for the NHS each year.
- 8.4 The Cabinet Member for Finance discussed that the Council had a good track record in bringing in funding and this would support the council to access external funding in the future.
- 8.5 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste pointed out that this strategy would help the council in its aim towards net zero.
- 8.6 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation noted that page 20 of the report discussed that some journeys were too long for cycling and walking, especially for those with limited mobility. The report championed active transport options as choices where appropriate but did not demonise use of cars.
- 8.7 The Chair noted that the strategy would help make options other than the car easier for people but recognised that some people needed to use a car for various reasons. The Norwich Western Link would also help support elements of this strategy.
- 8.8 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to adopt the Norfolk Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy as shown in Appendix A of the report, to replace the Walking and Cycling Strategy 2017
- 8.9 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**
- Please see section 4 of the report.
- 8.10 **Alternative Options**
- Please see section 5 of the report.

9. Countywide Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan

- 9.1.1 Cabinet received the report summarising the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, building on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans already adopted for King's Lynn, Greater Norwich and Great Yarmouth in April 2022.
- 9.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This report would enable cycling, walking and wheeling in Norfolk and connectivity between 20 towns in the County.
 - It would link people with public transport, places of education and training and give residents and visitors access to green spaces.
 - All schemes contained within the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan were unfunded at the time of reporting; the next steps and potential active travel barriers to be addressed as part feasibility studies were set out in the report.
 - Development of the plan included input from district councils and aligned with local planning policy, transport policy, environment and air quality policy and public health policy.
 - Two phases of public engagement had been completed to develop the Plan.
 - Adoption of the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan would support future active travel infrastructure funding bids, including funding from Active Travel England and development funding.
 - The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste moved the recommendations as set out in the report
- 9.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing felt this was an important plan to give towns in the County access to walking, wheeling and cycling. He hoped there would be greater ambition and recognition for rural areas not set out in government policy, as well as for people riding horses to keep them off of roads, due to the high accident rates for these road users.
- 9.3 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport welcomed that this report supported commuter cycling and connectivity to jobs, especially in market towns.
- 9.4 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted that 69% of people had said 'Better maintenance of pavements and walkways'; 63% said 'Safer roads' and 40% said 'Safer crossing points' would encourage them to walk more in their local area. The council was putting in more cycle lanes, walkways and crossings, and this strategy would help access funding to continue to meet these improvements.
- 9.5 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation noted the work carried out in Thetford by the Greater Thetford Partnership, but also concerns expressed by some residents in the area. It was important that car use was not demonised, and she noted that this plan sought to provide choice for people.
- 9.6 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth discussed the importance of market towns for the Norfolk economy and this strategy would help support people access jobs in these areas.

- 9.7 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste confirmed that equestrian road usage was being considered by the team. They were also exploring areas of the network suitable for people with mobility issues.
- 9.8 The Chair noted that other areas were being considered which were not mentioned in the report, such as safe crossings for schools.
- 9.9 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to approve and adopt the appended 'Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Main Report February 2024' and the 'Countywide LCWIP Annex A: Programme of Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Improvements for Norfolk February 2024'.

9.10 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report.

9.11 **Alternative Options**

Delay or postponement of adoption of the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan could result in missed external funding opportunities from Active Travel England.

Not adopting the Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan could also hinder Norfolk County Council's effectiveness in delivering active travel schemes and make it harder for district and boroughs to identify priority schemes to put forward when funding arises.

10. Adult Social Services Promoting Independence Five Year Strategy

10.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out how feedback from public engagement had been used to update Norfolk County Council's Promoting Independence strategy, link it to activities within the County Council's Annual Plan and show how the Council is meeting the objectives of Better Together, for Norfolk.

10.1.2 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Norfolk County Council's vision over the last 5 years was to help people be more independent. Adult Social Care could help people be more independent by Providing care and support, safeguarding and supporting carers.
- It was important to put forward an ambitious strategy, setting out the council's aims over the next 5 years. The Promoting Independence Strategy set out a policy framework, developed with engagement with people in Norfolk through drop in events, focus groups and workshops. Feedback from these had helped to shape the strategy.
- The Learning Disabilities plan had also been co-produced with groups in Norfolk.
- The Promoting Independence 5-year strategy and Learning Disabilities plan showed the dedication of the council to provide services to people who needed them the most.

10.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing discussed that the report

focused on helping people to stay active, independent and well for as long as possible.

- 10.3 The Vice-Chair stated that Promoting Independence had been a successful strategy, ensuring people had access to the right support at the right time and reducing costs to the council.
- 10.4 The Chair noted that people wanted to stay in their homes and stay healthy for as long as possible. Moving to a residential setting could be a big change for people so staying at home for as long as possible was the best option. Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives were put in place to look at people who may be at risk of falls to put adaptations in place in their homes which could reduce this risk.
- 10.5 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to endorse the refreshed Promoting Independence Adult Social Services Five Year Strategy and recommend for adoption at Full Council

10.6 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report.

10.7 **Alternative Options**

The refresh of the Strategy is based on the feedback from Norfolk residents following a significant engagement process. The strategy is focused on continuing to promote independence that improves outcomes for people. No alternative option to this strategy is proposed.

11. **Learning Disabilities and Autism**

- 11.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out detail of the new Learning Disability Plan 2023-28 and a joint review process between Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board and Adult Social Services to strengthen commissioning and collaborative working for people with Learning Disability and Autism, carried out in 2023-24.
- 11.1.2 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This plan was co-produced with people with learning disabilities and autism and information in the plan was based on their views and the views of their carers.
 - The plan was developed with the Autism Partnership Board, and changes were made based on their feedback, including dropping the word “strategy” and replacing it with the word “plan”.
 - The report set out a 5-year priority plan with 5 priority areas and set out how the Council and Adult Social Services would support implementation of the plan.
- 11.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing added that the NHS had been involved in this report; transfer of commissioning of Specialist Health Services to the Integrated Care Board was one of the recommendations. The Integrated Care Board had received and agreed this at their recent meeting.
- 11.3 The Chair welcomed the report, noting it was important to tailor services towards

those with learning disabilities and autism in a way that they could understand.

11.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

- agree the actions for Adult Social Services in the Learning Disability Plan 2023-28.
- agree the actions for Adult Social Services in response to the joint review of Learning Disability and Autism.
- agree to transfer the commissioning of Specialist Health Services to the Integrated Care Board in line with the approach set out in Section 5 of the report.
- delegate the authority for the financial arrangements relating to the transfer of Specialist Health Services to the Integrated Care Board to the Interim Executive Director Adult Social Services.

11.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

People with Learning Disabilities and Autism are a relatively small but vulnerable cohort of people with lifelong challenges who can, and deserve to, lead wonderful, ordinary lives with social care and health supporting them where needed. Delivering against the priorities in the Learning Disability Plan 2023-28 and the recommendations from the Review would help to continue the improvement in the provision of services and outcomes for people with Learning Disabilities and Autism.

11.6 **Alternative Options**

Without carrying out the actions in the Learning Disability Plan and in response to the Tricordant review of commissioning for Learning Disability and Autism the required improvements to the commissioning of services and the provision of support to people would not be delivered.

12. **Trading Standards Service Plan 2024/25**

12.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the Trading Standards Service Plan and associated sub-plans which set out the service priorities for 2024/25, taking account of the service budget set in February 2024, and focusing on areas as set out in the report.

12.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The Trading Standards department supported the Council to fulfil its statutory duties and address its priorities. They helped protect people from scams, fraud and rogue traders, supported by no cold call zones and the trusted trader scheme, and other areas, set out in the report.
- In 2023, Trading Standards joined Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to increase collaboration and efficacy in addressing issues with faulty products such as e-scooter chargers.
- A few years ago, there was a shortage of qualified workers, so the department recruited and trained new staff. The first cohort achieved their certificates in April 2023, and more apprentices were due to start soon.
- In November of 2023, the Head of Trading Standards was highly commended in the Diversity and Inclusion category of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) Hero Awards for her dedication to

support and promote a career path for a more inclusive Trading Standards workforce.

- The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships moved the recommendations as set out in the report

12.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services discussed that 44,360 illegal cigarettes and 14,961 illegal vapes had been seized by the Trading Services team.

12.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing also noted the work of the team in tackling sale of illegal vapes and tobacco and sale to underage customers.

12.4 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth congratulated the team for their apprenticeships, which were a valuable entry point for people of all ages to enter a new career. The Cabinet Member thanked Trading Standards for their work during the avian flu outbreak; Norfolk was now an Avian Flu free zone.

12.5 The Chair agreed with the comments on apprenticeships and discussed that there would be a marquee showing apprenticeship opportunities and showcasing careers with the council at the Norfolk Show.

12.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree and adopt the Trading Standards Service Plan 2024/25 and associated Annexes set out in Appendices 1 to 4 of the report.

12.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

The Trading Standards Service Plan, inclusive of Annexes I, II and III (Appendices 1 to 4), was considered to be the most effective way to demonstrate how the service intended to fulfil its regulatory/statutory responsibilities, taking into account the available intelligence, resources and the Better Together, for Norfolk priorities we are seeking to support.

12.8 **Alternative Options**

The proposed Plan and associated annexes were prepared following staff engagement and considered to set out the most effective approach and best fit with the strategic direction of government and Norfolk County Council. Alternative approaches could be taken, but these would require further work to develop, may be constrained by the need to ensure we have capacity to fulfil our statutory duties, and may result in a need to secure additional funding for delivery.

13. **Authority to Enact Revenue Pipeline**

13.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the Council's approach to contracting and procurement which ensured coherent, upstream arrangements for the 'contract pipeline'.

13.1.2 The Vice-Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The processes set out in the report represented good governance and detailed the contracts that would be placed over the coming year.
- Additional selection criteria and contract management processes had

been developed, should they be needed

13.2 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance noted that purchasing and procurement were important areas for business and for saving money.

13.3 The Chair agreed that it was important to ensure the council was achieving best value for money with taxpayers' money.

13.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree:

1. To proceed with the procurement actions set out in Annex A of the report.
2. To delegate to each responsible chief officer authority to discuss with the contractors concerned the issues around extension of contracts designated herein as open for extension and to determine whether to extend the contracts (with such modifications as the chief officer considers necessary) or whether to conduct a procurement exercise to replace them.
3. To delegate to the Director of Procurement and Sustainability authority to undertake the necessary procurement processes including the determination of the minimum standards and selection criteria (if any); to shortlist bidders; to make provisional award decisions; to award contracts; to negotiate where the procurement procedure so permits; and to terminate award procedures if necessary.
4. That the officers exercising the delegated authorities set out above shall do so in accordance with the council's Contract Standing Orders and procurement law and in consultation, as appropriate, with the responsible Cabinet Member.

13.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Cabinet recommended adoption of the budget and it was also logical that it approve the decisions in respect of contracts needed to deliver the budget. Expedient execution of the contract pipeline requires the delegations to officers set out in the paper.

Reasons for decisions about individual contracts or groups of contracts are set out at Annex A of the report.

13.6 **Alternative Options**

Cabinet could choose not to approve the delegations set out herein. This would require a plethora of individual cabinet or cabinet member decisions and be likely to delay programme execution: this course of action is not recommended.

14 **Corporately Significant Vital Signs**

14.1.1 Cabinet received the quarter 3 report providing an update on the Council's performance against its Corporately Significant Vital Signs.

14.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The council continued to operate in a period of challenge and to actively respond to changes in the national landscape around performance. The strategy for the Office for Local Government had been confirmed and more scrutiny was expected in this area in relation to new Productivity

Plans would be submitted in July 24.

- The Council continued to respond to internal pressures on how resources were used to provide the best outcomes for residents while providing a balanced budget.
- Vital signs continued to be reviewed across departments, including revised signs for retained measures with an aim to ensure focus on performance across all services was on target and with the right stretch targets in place.
- Across the quarter, a self-assessment and peer review of commercial activity under the Cabinet Office's Commercial Continuous Improvement
- Assessment Framework had been carried out. A rating of good was achieved, matching the wider rating of the assessment cohort. This showed good commitment for improvement and would allow the Council to benchmark activity against this in the future.
- Performance against quarter 3 had seen an uplift against measures, with an increase of 6 green measures, 3 amber and 4 red. Corrective actions to improve performance were shown in the report.
- The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation moved the recommendations as shown in the report.

14.2 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Review and comment on the end of Quarter 3 performance data and associated narrative.
2. Agree the 18 highlighted actions as set out in the report
3. Agree the proposed changes to the Vital Signs Measures for 24/25 where relevant.

14.3 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Provided in the narrative under each departmental section.

14.4 **Alternative Options**

Information Report.

15. **Risk Management Report**

15.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the reviewed and updated corporate risks, as at April 2024.

15.1.2 the Chair introduced the report to Cabinet. The risk score changes were shown in the report in appendix A, of which there were 7.

15.2 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree:

1. The key proposed changes to corporate risks since the last report to January 2024 Cabinet (shown in paragraph and 2.2 and Appendix A of the report)
2. The corporate risks as at April 2024 (Appendices B and C of the report)
3. The departmental risk summaries (Appendix D of the report)
4. Full details of red rated departmental risks (Appendix E of the report)
5. That all risk information covered within the report is satisfactory.

15.3 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Not applicable as no decision is being made.

15.4 **Alternative Options**

There are no alternatives identified.

16. **Finance Monitoring**

16.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out a summary of the forecast financial position for the 2023-24 Revenue and Capital Budgets, General Balances, and the Council's Reserves at 31 March 2024, together with related financial information.

16.1.2 The Vice-Chair introduced the report to Cabinet:

- It was important to ensure there were no unforeseen overspends; at the end of February 2024, the Council continued to forecast a balanced budget.
- Departmental overspends continued as previously forecast and were detailed in the report. One area of continuing concern was the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which saw an increase in February 2024 of £41.99m bringing the forecast DSG to £80.73m, driven in part by invest to save, the plan to deliver savings in future years, demand and cost pressures.
- Dedicated Schools Grant pressures were seen across the country and the government had confirmed that statutory overrides would stay in place until 2025-26 so the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit was not shown in the main revenue budget.
- Reserves detailed in table 3 showed a healthy balance at over £145m excluding Dedicated Schools Grant. Negative movement of £56m was due to use of reserves during the year as use of reserves would help achieve a balanced position.
- Cash balances were healthy at £175m, reducing the need to borrow. The council was successful in bringing in external funding, reducing borrowing requirements.
- The finance department had been asked to develop additional spending controls if required and manage departmental reserves.
- Procurement methods and implementation would continue to be improved, and, as set out in recommendation 1, there was a proposal to move £7.5m to the Capital Programme. Most of this related to external funding but £1.571m related to use of capital receipts.
- Recommendation 2 related to transfer of funds for specific projects and was detailed in the report.
- The Vice-Chair moved the recommendations as set out in the report.

16.2 The Chair noted that the report showed council finances were on track and that prudent processes were in place.

16.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the increase of £7.5m to the capital programme to address capital funding requirements previously approved by full Council as set out in detail in capital Appendix 3, paragraph 1.4 of the report as follows:
 - £2m CIL funding allocated to the Hethersett High Masterplan refresh

- £2.736m Road resurfacing funded from Department for Transport allocation previously reported in P10 and in the Capital Strategy and approved by the Council in February 24
 - £0.5m external funding received for the Adult Social Care Supported Living programme
 - £0.257m S106 developer contribution for Watton
 - £0.286m external funding received for the Environment Capital maintenance fund
 - £1.571m flexible utilisation of capital receipts for Strategy and Transformation costs
 - £0.148m minor adjustments to capital projects for S106 contributions and revenue contributions as set out in Annex 1 of the report
2. To approve the allocation from the SEND and Schools capital programme to specific new schools projects as follows:
 - 2.1. Watton Junior - £1.717m High Needs Block funding and £0.5m S106 developer contribution funding to create 16 new SEMH places for children in primary school as part of the Local First Inclusion programme.
 - 2.2. Cringleford - £9.45m Basic Need funding from DfE and £2m CIL funding to build a new 420 place primary school in response to considerable housing development.

These virements are within the Children Services Capital programme previously approved by Full Council in February 2023
 3. To note the revised current and future 2023-28 capital programme as set out in Appendix 3 of the report including the forecast capital expenditure of £222.536m for 2023-24, the £2.5m allocation of flexible use of capital receipts for the Children's Services Transformation programme, the notification of new funding awarded by the Department of Transport and the significant reprofiling undertaken to date.
 4. To delegate to the Director of Procurement and the Director of Property to undertake the necessary procurement and tender processes to deliver this revised capital programme in accordance with the delegated authority awarded on 6 March 2023 in the Authority to enact Capital Programme paper - [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#).
 5. To agree the period 11 general fund revenue forecast of a balanced budget, noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to reduce or eliminate potential over-spends where these occur within services.
 6. To agree the period 11 forecast of 97% savings delivery in 2023-24, noting also that Executive Directors will continue to take measures to mitigate potential savings shortfalls through alternative savings or underspends.
 7. To note the forecast General Balances at 31 March 2024 of £25.410m.
 8. To approve the write-off ten debts over £10,000 totalling £179,034.14 due to the exhaustion of estate and legal options where there is no further possibility of recovery, as set out in Appendix 2 paragraph 3.11 of the report.

16.4 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report.

16.5 **Alternative Options**

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

expenditure, apart from the funding noted in Appendix 3 of the report.

17. Decisions made since last meeting

- 17.1.1 Cllr Vardy noted that a Memorandum of Understanding was in place with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to help people affected by flooding to receive funding. the Chair was pleased that this support was in place and commended the work of Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance. The Alliance were holding a summit later in the year to discuss the issue of flooding in Norfolk and how it could be addressed.
- 17.1.2 Cabinet noted the delegated decisions which had been taken, as set out in the agenda

18. County Farms Rural Estates Strategy 2024-2027

- 18.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the new County Farms Rural Estates Strategy 2024-2027.
- 18.1.2 Recommendation 2 of this report related to information contained within an exempt appendix. Cabinet agreed that they had considered information contained within the exempt appendix and could therefore take the appendix as read, without moving into a private session.
- 18.1.3 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:
- The County Farms Rural Estates Strategy would ensure sustainable, gold standard land management for next generation farming and set out an investment plan to maintain and develop building infrastructure to ensure it was fit for modern agriculture while also reducing the impact on the environment.
 - The County Farms Estate supported 210 tenancies, with 139 farmers, 85 dwellings and 506 outbuildings and was the second largest local authority farm estate in England and Wales.
 - The County Farms Estate generated around £2.5m income per year in addition to sales from land and had supported the Council's capital receipts programme by providing land for house building and infrastructure.
 - There were proposals to increase the size of progression farms following feedback from tenants, to satisfy their need for growth and viability. It was important to ensure that tenant farmers were viable and could provide for Norfolk.
 - The proposals set out in the strategy also supported proposals for new tenant holdings to support and inspire new and young farmers to take on holdings. There were 23 applications for 4 new farms that were advertised recently.
 - The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation moved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 18.2 The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth reported that the size of the Norfolk County Farms Estate was not being reduced in size; farms were being developed to allow people to start farming and thrive in the business.

- 18.3 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing noted that the estate was larger today than in 2010 and the continued commitment to farming in the County, which was a contributor to the Norfolk economy.
- 18.4 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport discussed that the County Farms Estate had provided much needed land for housing, land for tree planting, land for a recreational woodland, and for road infrastructure projects and noted the importance of farming in Norfolk.
- 18.5 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance pointed out that the County Farms Estate produced a return both for Norfolk County Council and for the Norfolk economy. The strategy presented in the report would be a productive way forward for the Estate.
- 18.6 The Chair noted the large size of the county farms estate, supporting the economy of Norfolk which was an agricultural county, and this strategy would help people to get into farming. She discussed the good work of Clinks Care farm which supported people with learning disabilities and other needs.
- 18.7 Cabinet **RESOLVED**
1. to approve the principles in this paper, including Appendix 1 and the new Rural Strategy for 2024-2027
 2. To approve the plans for individual estates, as set out in the confidential Appendix 2 of the report.
- 18.8 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**
- Firstly, by listening to farmers who have the opportunity to grow their business with larger holdings and hearing their frustrations that holdings are in some cases spread across other farms and not adjacent to homes. Secondly, this proposal represents the opportunity to realise capital receipts for parcels of land which might otherwise be economically inactive.
- 18.9 **Alternative Options**
- Alternative options were discounted as they would either be stifling business growth in certain areas where tenants need larger holdings, and in addition not an optimised allocation of farms where a house and the holding are spread across several parcels. Further options had been discounted based on the lack of value to community and environment.
- 19. Exclusion of the Public**
- 19.1 Cabinet resolved **NOT** to exclude the public.
- 20. County Farms Rural Estates Strategy 2024-2027: Exempt appendix**
- 20.1 Cabinet noted the contents of the exempt appendix.

The meeting ended at 11:18

Chair of Cabinet

**Cabinet
8 April 2024
Public & Local Member Questions**

	Public Question Time
6.1	<p>Question from Robert Johnson People driving dangerously on Quebec Road, Norwich are resorting to violence and assaulting one another in the street. This includes brawling, throwing bottles and verbal aggression and abuse. They mount the pavements aggressively, even when children are walking to school. What will be done to improve the safety and lives of pedestrians and residents on Quebec Road. Can I ask that this isn't dismissed as 'wokery' or 'war on motorists' or other right wing culture war distraction techniques. It's a serious issue and needs addressing with urgency.</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport I am sorry to hear of the incidents described. I will ask officers to review the location to establish whether there are highways related aspects that are negatively impacting on how Quebec Road is operating. In the meantime, instances of poor driving or aggression should be reported to Norfolk Constabulary.</p>
6.2	<p>Question from Dave Evans Duncan Baker MP, North Norfolk, stated in Parliament (Hansard, 5/3/24) that "Norfolk County Council is the first council in the country to ban glyphosate". Can Norfolk CC confirm that this is correct?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Brighton and Hove were the first Council to ban glyphosate. The County Council has not banned glyphosate.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Dave Evans If incorrect, what is Norfolk CC's justification for the continued use of glyphosate?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste I understand the concerns about the use of this type of product, and we have carefully and fully considered our approach, which is set out in our Glyphosate policy here Glyphosate policy - Norfolk County Council. Our use of glyphosate has significantly reduced over recent years.</p> <p>We are committed to minimising the use of herbicides, including those containing glyphosate, to control weeds or other undesirable plant species on our managed land, whilst still maintaining safe and healthy spaces fit for purpose and appropriate use by our communities. As set out in our policy, we will always take an integrated approach and ensure, especially where glyphosate products are used, that use is minimised and targeted to achieve agreed levels of weed management for given situations.</p> <p>We will regularly review new methods of weed management as they become available, with a view to trialling these where they offer a viable alternative to glyphosate use but do not compromise other objectives in terms of health and safety, the environment and our commitment to meeting carbon targets. Wherever possible we will not use Glyphosate</p>

based products and we will clearly state areas where glyphosate products should not be used.

It is worth noting that in areas where authorities have banned the use of glyphosate, a number are now reversing those bans because they have found that alternative products or processes are not viable or effective. For example, Brighton and Hove Council, the first local authority to introduce a ban, has now reversed this, and Cambridge County Council is reintroducing chemical weed control a year after making changes that removed it.

6.3 Question from Paula Evans

In February one of the biggest council pension funds in the country, West Yorkshire Pension Fund, declared that it will halt all new investments in oil and gas companies. The Norfolk Pension fund invests £81.8M in fossil fuels. What actions will Norfolk CC take to persuade the Norfolk Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance

We cannot comment specifically on the actions of another Pension Fund and unfortunately, we do not recognise the number quoted in the question relating to the Norfolk Pension Fund. The Fund has published a clear statement on Disinvestment/Exclusion & ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) Aspects of Investment Strategy, which sets out the approach on these issues. The Statement is available on the Fund's website www.norfolkpensionfund.org

Supplementary question from Paula Evans

Can Norfolk CC confirm that they are satisfied that the Norfolk Pension Fund is showing financial prudence and acting on its fiduciary duty?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance

The Fund's Statement on Disinvestment/Exclusion & ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) Aspects of Investment Strategy sets out the primary importance of its fiduciary duty when the Fund makes any investment decision.

6.4 Question from Elizabeth Traverse

Council tax bills for people in Norfolk will go up by 4.9%, while £42M of cuts and savings will be made as agreed by Council. How can the ongoing expenses related to the proposed Norwich Western link be justified under such circumstances?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

We know a lot of people and businesses in Norfolk are being badly affected by traffic congestion to the west of Norwich every day, and the Norwich Western Link (NWL) is the best solution to these problems. The benefits the NWL will create for Norfolk's residents, businesses and economy, and the national funding the project will bring into Norfolk, means this project remains a good investment and a priority infrastructure project for Norfolk.

Supplementary question from Elizabeth Traverse

Should the government contribute only 80% of the cost of construction if the NWL goes ahead, how will the shortfall be met?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

We are optimistic that government will contribute 100% of the Outline Business Case

(OBC) scheme cost and are awaiting guidance to be published by DfT (Department for Transport). If 100% of the OBC funding from DfT was not secured, the Council would fund the project in the manner detailed in the 4 December Cabinet report. The overall borrowing capacity of the Council is managed alongside the capital programme and is managed at a level that is deemed affordable.

6.5 **Question from Pollina Cant**

The Norfolk County Council's Climate Policy 2024 states "Norfolk County Council will lead by example through making its own estate net zero by 2030." 2030 is only six years away, is there sufficient urgency in the Council's plans to attain this goal?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

The council has reduced the carbon footprint of its estate by nearly 60% since 2016/17, but you are right to point out that there is much still to be done. A range of initiatives are under way to keep momentum towards reaching our 2030 target which demonstrate our seriousness in getting there. Over the past two years we have installed over 50 electric vehicle charging points across our estate – with more still to be installed - to enable the transition of the council's vehicle fleet to electric cars and vans over the coming years. We have earmarked over £20 million in our Future Ready building improvement programme that will see many of our freehold buildings become more energy efficient as well as replace gas or oil heating systems with low carbon electric heat pumps. Furthermore, by the end of 2025 we will have converted nearly our entire streetlight stock to energy efficient LED bulbs. These will help us towards hitting our stepping stone targets towards net zero by 2030, which are: a 66% reduction in our estate emissions by 2024/25, 85% reduction by 2028/29 and 90% reduction by 2030/31 with the remaining 10% offset.

Supplementary question from Pollina Cant

It is stated that for the 10% remaining carbon footprint in 2030/31 that suitable certified offsets will be utilised. What are the certified offsets?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

There are a growing number of certification standards being set up that give quality assurance to offsetting credits by validating the projects underpinning them as genuine and offering a real offset benefit that isn't double counted through use by another organisations. When the council looks to obtain offsetting credits, it will source credits that are appropriately certified in this way.

6.6 **Question from Becky Aro**

The Council is intent to promote green skill development to support the domestic building retrofit agenda. What specifically are the Council's plans to address the skills development?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

'Following the commissioning and production of the Green Skills Market Analysis, establishing projected/statistical skills demand of the future Norfolk workforce, the Employment & Skills Service are currently implementing the INCREEES project (Improving Norfolk Carbon Reduction and Energy Efficiency in existing Stock), funded through the Norfolk Investment Framework fund. The project work themes include the commissioning of a feasibility study for a fully costed Norfolk Net-Zero Academy and/or Norfolk training provider network. Consequential intervention will complement accelerating local training

provider provision and alternatively funded projects including the Local Skills Improvement Fund ('LSIF').

Within our collaborative regional Skills Hub arrangement with Suffolk County Council, working closely with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which includes the central theme of Net-zero/Green skills, we have established new sector skills groups (including Green Skills and Construction), working with the private sector to identify and articulate current and emerging skills gaps and shape local provider curriculum planning, with potential to inform Adult Education Budget delivery. Aligned to LSIP priorities and economic strategy, an example of new curriculum intent is the inclusion of retrofit assessors, advisors, and co-ordinators in the next wave of Skills Bootcamp tender specification.

In the advent of the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) from August 2025, E&S continue to collaborate with the AEB/Adult Skills funding programme, ensuring that Green Skills provision is prioritised with future AEB commissioning and delivery plans.'

6.7 Question from Sarah Burston

It is widely recognised that we are in a nature emergency. The latest State of Nature report shows how stark the problem is, with one in six species across the UK now at risk of extinction. What actions are Norfolk CC taking in our county to address this serious issue?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

There are a number of things that we are doing focussed on and around nature recovery restoring, enhancing, or protecting natural habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity.

This includes working in partnership with Suffolk County Council and the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Within the Strategy we will consider how to address species recovery within Norfolk. You can read more about the work that we are doing here [Space for nature to recover and grow - Norfolk County Council](#)

Supplementary question from Sarah Burston

Does Norfolk CC have any specific plans to address species recovery in Norfolk?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

As well as developing a draft Norfolk Pollinator Action Plan we are working in partnership with Suffolk County Council and the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Within the Strategy we will consider how to address species recovery within Norfolk.

6.8 Question from Sarah Eglington

January and February 2024 continued the trend of record-breaking temperatures, both in the UK and globally. What are Norfolk County Council going to do to prepare for probable heatwaves this summer, including supporting our health services and the vulnerable, but also our transport infrastructure, farmers and firefighters?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

Norfolk County Council has an environmental policy <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/environmentpolicy>. Within it we commit to working with key partners to ensure an adequate water supply, including exploring water harvesting

initiatives. We are in a partnership to scale up investment in nature-based solutions to tackle Norfolk's water security challenges. [Norfolk Water Strategy Programme - Water Resources East \(wre.org.uk\)](https://www.wre.org.uk)

Norfolk Fire and Rescue:

Following the wildfires of Summer 2022, Norfolk Fire and Rescue undertook a review and have strengthened both their prevention and response capability, NFRS have rolled out specific wildfire incident command training, reviewed resource models and have invested in wildfire PPE for all firefighters to reduce the chance of heat exhaustion. New equipment such as misting branches have also been added to new fire appliance to improve fire-fighting techniques. Collaborations with NFU and local farmers to identify water sources in rural farm locations has also been undertaken, along with engagement sessions on prevention advice.

Prevention messaging to the general public was also changed from last year to include advice on how to protect your property, as well as the usual safety messages around high risk items such as disposable barbecues and Chinese lanterns

Public Health

As in previous years Public Health will issue, if required, advice to people in Norfolk on how to stay safe during hot weather, based on national guidance which was updated in March 2024. [Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Highways

We review data provided to us from our weather provider (similar to our winter services) with regard to road surface temperatures throughout the summer period and set up operatives to deal with particular locations identified or reported with high-temperature impacts. Our contractors will also monitor surface dressing sites delivered each year and will treat accordingly where there are any high-temperature impacts.

In addition, we constantly review new innovations in surfacing treatments, such as the use of polymer modified binders which have a greater scope to address higher temperatures.

6.9

Question from Tina Johnson

Norfolk County Council has declared that it will establish a "Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Norfolk that prioritises areas for action focusing on species, habitats, landscapes and land use of importance to Norfolk". Is there sufficient expertise within the Council to develop such a strategy?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

We are working in partnership with Suffolk County Council and the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. As well as having a dedicated project team to deliver the strategy we will use expertise from across the Environment Service in NCC, as well as experts from across the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership which includes over 40 organisations.

Supplementary question from Tina Johnson

With which expert, interest, community and other groups will the Council engage with when developing the strategy?

	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste As well as working with the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership we will be engaging with organisations, individuals and communities throughout 2024 to develop the strategy. For example, landowners and managers, Nature Conservation Organisations, Statutory Bodies, Business, Tourism, Health and Wellbeing and Access organisations. For more information, please visit What a Local Nature Recovery Strategy is - Norfolk County Council</p>
6.10	<p>Question from Willem Buttinger Nature is in crisis: 18 local authorities have emerging Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policies above 10%, what is the council doing to provide leadership in driving a higher ambition for BNG targets across Local Planning Authorities in Norfolk?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Currently Norfolk County Council will be delivering the statutory minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, but we have committed to considering a higher ambition within our new Environment Strategy which we are developing in 2024.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Willem Buttinger How is the council prioritising its creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste We are already working in partnership with Suffolk County Council and the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. We are prioritising this within the Environment Service and have a dedicated project team to deliver the strategy.</p>
6.11	<p>Question from Mary Curson As a step toward net zero, what influence can Norfolk CC have on the District Council's planning committees to ensure installation of gas boilers is prohibited in new-build housing?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste In addition to determining planning applications the District Authorities also have responsibility for setting policy standards. The opportunity for the County Council to directly affect district planning decisions on these matters is therefore extremely limited. There are opportunities for the County council to indirectly influence decision making through achieving high standards on its own development.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Mary Curson Can Norfolk CC put pressure on District Council planning committees to ensure solar panels are fitted to all new-build housing?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste There are no direct mechanisms for the County Council to exercise that would impact upon the level of solar panels required by the district council's planning policies.</p>
6.12	<p>Question from David Curson</p>

With a question mark now hanging over the proposed Norwich Western Link, will the council continue to spend more of the taxpayers' money on pursuing this mis-guided adventure or will money now be spent on preparing the county for extreme weather conditions that will occur in the near future?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Norwich Western Link is a priority infrastructure project for Norfolk County Council and we are keen to try to find an acceptable solution to the issues that may impact the project approvals that enable us to deliver it. We are taking a balanced approach to the latest developments and will continue to review the activity that is planned on the project with a view to keeping project costs as low as possible.

Supplementary question from David Curson

Will the council now focus on adding to Norfolk's biodiversity rather than destroying it?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The council's work is informed by the need to support the county's biodiversity, both as part of the Norwich Western Link and our wider work, as set out in our Environmental Policy. Projects such as 1 Million Trees for Norfolk are underway to provide better habitats for wildlife and more green spaces.

6.13 Question from Elizabeth Hacker

Plastic (fake) grass is environmentally damaging, a source of microplastic pollution in our waterways and contributes to biodiversity loss - nothing can live under it or on it. Will the Council remove plastic grass from schools and other areas under its control?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

We are unaware of the use of plastic grass in any property under the direct control of NCC.

Supplementary question from Elizabeth Hacker

Plastic grass has a lifespan of 8-10 years, at most, before being sent to landfill. What is the Council's strategy to dispose of plastic grass from their properties in an environmentally friendly manner?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

We are unaware of the use of plastic grass in any property under the direct control of NCC.

6.14 Question from David Pett

'Given the council leader's stance that the continuation of the project (NWL) is non-negotiable due to its status as a manifesto commitment, does this position inherently place Conservative members of the Planning Committee in a situation of conflict, particularly in terms of their ability to impartially evaluate the project's merits and potential impacts?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

No, we do not agree that this creates a blanket predetermined position. All members sitting on planning or other committees will continue to keep their interests/position with regard to pre determination under review and will take advice as appropriate.

6.15	<p>Question from Holly Evanbrook What is the council doing to screen its investments and treasury management to ensure that Norfolk council tax payers are not contributing to new fossil fuel expansion?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The Council's treasury investments are managed in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy approved by the Full Council (see page 359). Treasury investments are only deposited with Banks, Building Societies and Money Market Funds (containing investments with banks), and as such the Council has no direct investments with fossil fuel companies (for treasury purposes, the Council does not invest in shares in the same way as the Pension Fund). It should be noted that the Council does not monitor what stance the counterparties it is investing with may take on any issues including fossil fuels. The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the yield or return on the investment is also a key consideration. Please see the earlier answers for details in relation to the Norfolk Pension Fund.</p>
6.16	<p>Question from Carolyn Martin Officers advised the Cabinet before its meeting on 4 December that the DfT reserves the right to seek repayment of any grant made if the NWL is not constructed, including the £25m already paid. But the Cabinet believes that no repayment would be due, should Natural England refuse a bat mitigation licence (if and after planning permission is granted) since this would amount to the Government destroying any chance of the NWL being built. Natural England is not an arm of Government. It is a non-departmental advisory public body accountable only to Parliament. Does the leader have independent legal advice to justify the Cabinet's view?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy No legal advice has been sought regarding funding should the Norwich Western Link not be delivered. Our primary aim is to find an acceptable solution to the bat licence issue. Should we be unsuccessful in this, we would need to discuss the next steps with the Department for Transport. Given the situation we find ourselves in, it is our view that Norfolk should not be financially disadvantaged as a result of changes in Natural England's guidance.</p>
6.17	<p>Question from Dennis English Given that the existence of the barbastelle bat colony has been known for some time, can the Council explain why it has not given at any time any thought to formulating a 'Plan B' to mitigate the eventuality of the NWL project's failure?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The Norwich Western Link is considered to be the best solution to the traffic problems to the west of Norwich. Engagement with Natural England regarding ecological mitigation has been ongoing over many months and this has informed the development of our mitigation proposals. The project team will continue to discuss our proposals with Natural England as part of the planning process with the aim of finding a solution which would enable the necessary protected species licenses to be granted by Natural England should planning permission be granted for the Scheme.</p>

	<p>Supplementary question from Dennis English Why, despite previous warnings, is there no contingency fund available that can be called upon to investigate and bring forward a Plan B?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport There is no contingency fund as the Norwich Western Link is seen as the best solution to address the traffic problems to the west of Norwich and the project team have been focused on getting this scheme delivered.</p>
6.18	<p>Question from Louise Sheridan Given the recent developments and concerns surrounding the Norwich Western Link Road project, particularly regarding the protection of barbastelle bats and their "favourable conservation status," when was legal advice on how these environmental considerations might influence the project's progression sought, and if so, when was this advice obtained?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport Legal advice is provided as an integral part of the development of the scheme and the planning application submission and includes consideration of Favourable Conservation Status for known protected ecological species which has been reported as a risk to the project's delivery.</p>
6.19	<p>Question from Hanna Lene Schierff In relation to update on and discussions of the Council's plans around the Norwich Western Link Road: Is the Council willing to consider plans for implementing more cost-effective and easy-to-implement measures to alleviate congestion and rat running in the villages reportedly affected by the issues and is the Council willing to start working on these with immediate effect to help villagers suffering from the traffic problems?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport There are no easy to implement measures which would be effective at tackling the traffic problems to the west of Norwich. The Norwich Western Link is considered to be the best solution to the traffic problems to the west of Norwich. Our focus is on trying to find a solution which would enable the necessary protected species licences to be granted by Natural England. If this is not possible, we would need to consider if other measures could be implemented but without a higher standard route in place, we would not expect these to significantly improve the existing issues and deliver all the objectives of the Norwich Western Link project.</p>
6.20	<p>Question from Edward Henderson Will the Council leader apologise to the public for the Council submitting an Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department of Transport whilst ignoring multiple serious warnings from the public and wildlife experts that there were potential legal issues for planning due to the proven presence of rare barbastelle bat colonies directly on the Norwich Western Link road which may now result in Norfolk County Council having wasted the £25million of central government transport funding already received and spent?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</p>

	<p>The importance of barbastelle bats in the area is recognised and has been a key consideration in the development of the Norwich Western Link. The new guidance was completely unexpected and there had been no indication that it was being published.</p>
6.21	<p>Question from Milly Reilly What is the current level of domestic waste recycling across Norfolk broken down by waste category?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste In 2022/23, Norfolk's households reused, recycled and composted a total of 167,879 tonnes of waste which was 43.1% of all household waste collected. This consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,497 tonnes of reuse, primarily from shops at the County Council's recycling centres as well as other local authority or community initiatives. • 89,946 tonnes of recycling collected from the kerbside or recycling centres. • 76,936 tonnes of composting: the food and garden waste collected directly from householders or at the recycling centre. <p>Supplementary question from Milly Reilly Have the Council any plans to ban single use plastics from their properties and estate?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste Where possible NCC has sought to reduce waste on their estate and to encourage recycling., for example in providing biodegradable packing. NCC will continue to look at options to minimise the use of single use plastics, where practicable</p>
6.22	<p>Question from Anna Morgan Is it accurate to say that the council leader's scientific statements about barbastelle bats indicate a greater knowledge of their welfare than what is possessed by Natural England?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance I am not sure which statements are being referred to in this question, however our proposals for the Norwich Western Link are being informed by ecologists with a specialism in bats as well as through consultation with Natural England over several years.</p> <p>Supplementary question from Anna Morgan When the council leader, with her apparent great knowledge, talks about the 'will of the people' eg her comments in the EDP, which people's will is she talking about please (because her comments re the proposed Western Link Road are certainly not my will or that of thousands or millions of knowledgeable Norfolk people and expert organisations)?</p> <p>Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance Early rounds of public consultation demonstrated that there was significant support for a new road to be created between the A47 and Broadland Northway, and this informed the council's decision-making. We are aware that representatives from many of the local communities that are affected by the traffic problems to the west of Norwich are very keen to see the Norwich Western Link delivered. We have also received support for the project from within Norfolk's business community, many of whom rely on good transport infrastructure.</p>
6.23	<p>Question from Cecilia Rossi Why, after the council has allocated a substantial amount of public funds towards hiring</p>

ecologists and consultants, has there been such a delay in recognising the existence of the barbastelle bat colony as a major threat to the continuation of the project (the NWL)?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The importance of barbastelle bats in the area is recognised and has been a key consideration in the development of the Scheme. The new guidance was completely unexpected and there had been no indication that it was being published.

Supplementary question from Cecilia Rossi

What were the underlying reasons for the Council's Risk Assessment failing to identify the presence of the barbastelle bat colony as a significant risk factor that could potentially jeopardise the future of the project?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

Risks around ecological species present in the area have been identified and included in report updates. The project risk register includes a number of risks that relate to ecology including bats. Risks are scored based on what is known at points throughout the development of the project, however the new guidance published by Natural England last month was completely unexpected and there had been no indication that it was due to be published.

6.24 **Question from Amanda Fox**

Considering the Cabinet was seemingly caught off guard by the advice from NE (Natural England), despite previous warnings, and acknowledging that the presence of the barbastelle bat colony has been known to the Council for more than four years, is the leader of the Council considering resignation from her position?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance

No, I will not resign over this matter. We have known about the presence of barbastelle bats from the survey work we have undertaken over a number of years. Significant mitigation and enhancement measures have been incorporated into the scheme design to minimise impacts on all ecology impacted including barbastelle bats. The new guidance was completely unexpected and there had been no indication that it was being published.

The project team will continue to discuss our proposals with Natural England as part of the planning process.

Supplementary question from Amanda Fox

Will the Council leader apologise to the public for the Council submitting an Outline Business Case to the Department of Transport, ignoring multiple serious warnings from the public and wildlife experts about potential legal issues for planning, due to the proven presence of rare barbastelle bat colonies directly on the Norwich Western Link road which may now result in Norfolk County Council having wasted the £25million of central government transport funding already received

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance

No, I will not apologise. We know a lot of people and businesses in Norfolk are being badly affected by traffic congestion to the west of Norwich every day, and the Norwich Western Link is the best solution to these problems. The benefits the NWL will create for Norfolk's residents, businesses and economy, and the national funding the project will

bring into Norfolk, means this project remains a good investment and a priority infrastructure project for Norfolk. The Department for Transport agrees with us, and this is why they approved our Outline Business Case last year.

The importance of the barbastelle bats in the area is recognised and has been a key consideration in the development of the Scheme. The new guidance was completely unexpected and there had been no indication that it was being published. The project team will continue to discuss our proposals with Natural England as part of the planning process.

6.25 **Question from Mireille Heald**

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), stipulates that a 'competent authority' (which includes planning authorities) must have regard for the Regulations in their exercise of their functions i.e. planning permission should only be granted if a proposed development would not breach the offences listed under Regulation 43(1) and/or would be likely to be licensed by Natural England. Therefore why is the council saying it will press ahead with submitting the planning application for the Norwich Western Link when, by the council's own admission, Natural England have made it clear it will be "virtually impossible" to get a licence due to impacts on the barbastelle bat population?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Norwich Western Link is considered to be the best solution to the traffic problems to the west of Norwich. Engagement with Natural England regarding ecological mitigation has been ongoing over many months and this has informed the development of our mitigation proposals. The project team will continue to discuss our proposals with Natural England as part of the planning process with the aim of finding a solution which would enable the necessary protected species licenses to be granted by Natural England should planning permission be granted for the Scheme.

Supplementary question from Mireille Heald

Surely proceeding with submitting the planning application (when permission would have to be turned down because it would be in breach of the Regulations and a licence from Natural England cannot be granted) will continue to waste funds on this scheme and it should now be abandoned?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

A protected species license would only be granted by Natural England following the granting of planning permission. The project team will continue to discuss our proposals with Natural England as part of the planning process with the aim of finding a solution which would enable the necessary protected species licenses to be granted by Natural England should planning permission be granted for the Scheme. The planning committee will need to consider the likelihood of a license being granted when determining whether or not to grant planning permission for the Scheme.

We are taking a balanced approach to the latest developments and will continue to review the activity that is planned on the project with a view to keeping project costs as low as possible.

6.26 **Question from Hannah Hoechner**

Where can the public access documentation or evidence to substantiate the Council's

claim that if the NWL project is halted, there will be no requirement to refund any of the funds already disbursed by the Government?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

This is no such documentation. Our primary aim is to find an acceptable solution to the bat licence issue. Should we be unsuccessful in this, we would need to discuss the next steps with the Department for Transport. Given the situation we find ourselves in, it is our view that Norfolk should not be financially disadvantaged as a result of changes in Natural England's guidance.

6.27 **Question from the Norwich Council Watch Group 1**

The NCC Climate Policy for Norfolk (draft, 2024) clearly takes the IPCC's alarmingly 'hot' climate MODEL (!) as fact and discarding the cold DATA - see: 'IPCC Pressure Tactics Exposed' (YouTube); the 'World Climate Declaration ([Link](#)) signed by 1860+ climate scientists, and the film, 'Climate - the Movie: the Cold Truth' (YouTube), newly released and with the world's most highly regarded and rewarded climatologists speaking. All NCC councillors ought to visit these sources.

When is the NCC going to review the data and revise the draft?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

Local Authorities are not scientific bodies, and the science behind the causes and impacts of climate change are assessed by other public institutions - such as the Met Office, the Environment Agency, and the Climate Change Committee - to inform the national policy approach to this issue. A useful short guide on the evidence on climate change is published by the government here [[Climate change explained - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)] and another is available from the Met Office here [[What is climate change? - Met Office](#)]

Norfolk County Council's Climate Policy clarifies that it is aligning its county-wide approach with the national trajectory for net zero (not exceeding it). We have not selected one specific data model over another. The policy will be generally reviewed in two years' time.

Supplementary question from the Norwich Council Watch Group 1

The data presented in the film, 'Climate - the Movie' proves that our CO2 levels are currently at a record LOW. Last time CO2 was this scarce, humanity nearly perished of starvation. CO2 is necessary nourishment for plants and all other life forms.

How is NCC going to keep us alive if CO2 levels are forced further down the drain?

The public is waking up to this and will turn to YOU in increasing numbers.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

The Council's approach to supporting Norfolk's low carbon development aligns with the national commitment to reach net zero by 2050. The government's [Net Zero Strategy](#) emphasises that reaching net zero must go hand in hand with building the economy and national resilience: creating new jobs, developing new industries with innovative technologies and becoming a more energy secure nation with clean British energy. These principles of a balanced approach to climate issues that reflects local priorities and with boosting green growth at its heart are reflected in Norfolk County Council's Climate Policy.

6.28 **Question from Ruth Goodall**

If the A47 is dualled between North Tuddenham and Easton but the Norwich Western Link

does not go ahead what will be the consequences for the parish of Weston Longville?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The Norwich Western Link is considered to be the best solution to the traffic problems to the west of Norwich. A planning application is about to be submitted and the merits of the Scheme will be considered as part of the planning process. Should planning permission for the Scheme not be granted we would need to consider if other measures could be implemented but without a higher standard route in place, we would not expect these to significantly improve the existing issues and deliver all the objectives of the Norwich Western Link project.

6.29 **Question from Denise Carlo**

The Cabinet cited the appointments of competent technical experts and specialist legal advisors in response to a question from Cllr Rowett at December Cabinet seeking assurance of checks and legal advice obtained secures confidence that the Environment statement for the Norwich Western Link, including impacts on biodiversity will comply with all necessary legislation.

We are now being told that without further clarification or change to the recently published Definition of Favourable Conservation Status for barbastelle bat, the ability to obtain a protected species licence is doubtful.

Sustaining populations of protected species is embedded in environmental law. What advice have these appointees given that implies this publication sets a new baseline?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

A technical review of the feedback received from Natural England has taken place. Elements within this information have created the need to seek further engagement with Natural England to understand a greater level of detail on the comments made, and the reasoning behind elements of the feedback received.

A protected species license would only be granted by Natural England following the granting of planning permission. The project team will continue to discuss our proposals with Natural England as part of the planning process with the aim of finding a solution which would enable the necessary protected species licenses to be granted by Natural England should planning permission be granted for the Scheme.

Supplementary question from Denise Carlo

In 2018-19, WSP identified presence/proximity of barbastelle bats and their habitats along route options A, B, D. WSP advised C had potential to impact on possible maternity roosts in B, but mitigation measures would be easier/cheaper for C than B. Given level of barbastelle bat presence in Study Area woodlands, how did WSP manage to underestimate the significant presence of bats along C and express high degree of confidence over effectiveness of mitigation?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The assessment set out in the Option Selection Report 2019 was proportionate to the stage of development of the Scheme at that time. The importance of barbastelle bats in the area is recognised and has been a key consideration in the development of the Scheme. At the time of the OSR 2019 impacts upon barbastelle bat were recognised for

all route options (A, B, C and D), with largest impacts anticipated for routes A and B (western variant) given the known distribution of roosts at the time. Barbastelle targeted radiotracking was completed in 2019 as part of the wider suite of surveys. These surveys in 2019 did not record a barbastelle population within the northern woodland.

The mitigation proposals have been designed based on best practice, industry guidance and in response to the Environmental Impact Assessment carried out informed by surveys between 2019-2023.

6.30	<p>Question from Cllr Clare Morton on behalf of Weston Longville Parish Council Weston Longville Parish Council has always been an advocate for the Norwich Western Link, as this has seemed to be the only way to mitigate the large volumes of traffic that cross the Wensum Valley every day via the centre of our village. If the building of the Western Link is prevented by Natural England, what measures will Norfolk County Council take to protect the residents of Weston Longville from the physical dangers, health risks and loss of amenity that the current, and ever increasing, volumes of traffic represent to our parishioners?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport The Norwich Western Link is considered to be the best solution to the traffic problems to the west of Norwich. A planning application is about to be submitted and the merits of the Scheme will be considered as part of the planning process. Should planning permission for the Scheme not be granted then we would need to consider if other measures could be implemented but without a higher standard route in place, we would not expect these to significantly improve the existing issues and deliver all the objectives of the Norwich Western Link project.</p>
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Cabinet
8 April 2024
Public & Local Member Questions

	Local Member Question Time
7.1	<p>Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone Shared parental leave is an excellent policy which has extended important flexibility to parents of both sexes. However, there are incidents where it impacts on delegated budgets, in particular county-maintained schools. An increasing number of school staff are using shared parental leave. The County Council has already recognised that maternity leave costs have not historically been correctly charged to the maternity budget and is setting up an internal working group to resolve the charging issue. why is the council not willing to consider retrospective adjustment of shared parental leave costs for the 23-24 period?</p> <p>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services The Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) provides the funding for mainstream schools and is passed to them in accordance with the agreed funding formula for Norfolk, with the exception of any funds agreed to be held centrally, such as a Growth Fund, or de-delegated under the School and Early Years Finance and Childcare (Provision of Information About Young Children) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2024, all of which require agreement by Schools Forum as a whole or specific Members of Schools Forum in the case of de-delegations or ‘buy-back’ from the local authority.</p> <p>Schools and academies, therefore, have discretion over their own spending. There are regulations around the elements that mainstream schools can de-delegate funding for, maternity being one of them. Shared Parental leave can also be de-delegated, but this has not currently been agreed by Schools Forum (i.e. schools effectively retain this responsibility within their own budgets).</p> <p>Maintained schools that de-delegate monies through Schools Forum into the Maternity Budget each financial year are entitled to charge the costs of an employee on Maternity Leave to the Maternity Budget. In the last year, some employees' Maternity Leave costs have been incorrectly coded and, therefore, not charged to the correct budgets. An internal working group was set up to resolve the charging issue retrospectively and moving forwards. Corrections are being posted and so no school has lost funding as a result, and changes to the process have been implemented from 01/04/2024 to prevent the issue arising again.</p> <p>As stated, the monies currently de-delegated to the Maternity Budget do not cover Shared Parental Leave. Schools Forum have established a working group to look at whether the Maternity Budget could incorporate these costs and, if so, this would be from 2025-26 financial year at the earliest and is likely to require further de-delegation of budgets from schools to cover the full costs to do this. As the current de-delegated budget does not cover this type of leave, there is not the capacity in the budget to provide for a retrospective adjustment of Shared Parental Leave costs for the 23-24 period. In other words, any retrospective adjustment would result in an overspend on</p>

the budget, and was not provided for in the amounts originally de-delegated by schools for 23-24 or agreed to be de-delegated for 24-25.

7.2 Question from Cllr David Sayers

A failure to plan for growing numbers of children with special education needs and disabilities by this Conservative Government is catching up with councils across the country. It was recently reported that council spending on special needs transport has doubled in the last 5 years. How is this council ensuring value for money with rising costs and increases in demand?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Children's Services recently provided a report to the People and Communities Select Committee providing an overview of home to school transport arrangements and the range of measures being taken in Norfolk to ensure value for money whilst still meeting needs. The full report can be found here – [📄 HTST P&C Select Committee March 2024.docx](#)

Our response in Norfolk includes;

- A £150million capital investment from the council to build more specialist resource bases and special schools in Norfolk ensuring that children who *need* specialist education can access it closer to home
- Delivery of the Local First Inclusion Programme which invests significantly in mainstream schools to enable them to support children with special educational needs without the need to travel to a specialist setting
- The ongoing investment in independent travel training for children with special educational needs
- Ongoing strategic commissioning of transport provision whereby all additional transport resource requirements are put out through our Dynamic Purchasing System to all operators and contracts awarded based on lowest price. Contracts are regularly reviewed, re-planned and re-tendered to ensure ongoing best value for money.

Supplementary question from Cllr David Sayers

When a family makes the difficult decision to commit a loved one to residential care, they do so with the belief that this council will do all they can to provide provision that safeguards the individual.

I was shocked to learn that Norfolk has come second in a list of reported case sexual abuse in care homes, a total of 295 incidents have been reported in the county since 2019. What explanation does the cabinet member have for this failure in safeguarding our most vulnerable residents?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services

Thank you for your question.

We know that a total of 9,676 sexual incidents were reported to the CQC nationally and 295 reported in Norfolk. The number of reported notifications may not directly correspond to the number of individual incidents, and we are pleased that in Norfolk people feel that they have a voice that is heard and feel able to report any incident.

The incidence of sexual abuse allegations within care homes forms some 6% of all safeguarding concerns within the care home market in Norfolk. In 2022/23 74 safeguarding enquiries regarding allegations of sexual abuse were undertaken. 36 (49%) of that number were substantiated. In 2023/24 72 safeguarding enquiries regarding allegations of sexual abuse were undertaken. 27 (38%) of that number were substantiated. In a significant number of cases, wider issues concerning mental capacity and mental illness and cognitive decline play a significant aspect in the cases that have occurred.

While a relatively small decline has occurred over the period, ASSD remain vigilant. All allegations of sexual abuse are examined within care environments given the vulnerable nature of people who reside in such settings.

Safeguarding has a wider role in preventing such incidents from occurring by working with care home owners and staff alongside colleagues in the health service to raise quality and care provision, as well as investigating such incidents when they occur.

I would want to reassure all residents of Norfolk that ASSD has always had a focus on safeguarding vulnerable people wherever they are in Norfolk including care homes.

7.3 **Question from Cllr Brian Watkins**

The closure of the Bernard Matthews site at Great Witchingham came as a great shock to our residents and indeed those who relied upon the employment at the site for their livelihoods. It is good to hear that 2/3 of the laid off work force have been redeployed. Does the leader have any updates regarding the other 200 laid off workers?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy

NCC Employment and Skills Service officers attended a meeting organised by DWP in mid-March with the Bernard Matthews to identify the potential numbers of staff affected and to agree how support could be delivered on site. Bernard Matthews confirmed that a number of individuals had not been placed elsewhere, we understand this is mostly due to the location of the sites offered and that these workers would therefore be made redundant.

DWP Jobcentre Plus and the NCC-led Working Well Norfolk programme attended the Bernard Matthews site on 20th March and are working together to provide redundancy support sessions to workers, a number of individuals with long-term health conditions self-referred into the Working Well Norfolk service, where they will receive bespoke support to mitigate their barriers and to move back to the labour market

We understand that Bernard Matthews have further engaged with another local employer and recruitment agencies to support workers with alternative employment options.

Supplementary question from Cllr Brian Watkins

Could the Leader inform the Council how the 'bridge-building' is going with Norfolk's district councils over the developing County Deal, and in particular the identification of new infrastructure projects which could form part of a first five-year gateway programme?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy

The County Council has been working collaboratively with district councils to develop the list of projects to benefit from brownfield funding. The council is also working with district colleagues on the design of the Norfolk Investment Fund that will support other projects across the County as well as identifying potential projects for the fund. It is the intention to complete the design of the fund by early summer and agree the priority areas with our partners before inviting formal bids to the fund in due course. These partnerships are being further strengthened and embedded through the external governance that we have proposed, consisting of three key Boards, to which all Norfolk Local authorities will be invited to participate.

7.4 Question from Cllr John Crofts

Last year, Norfolk suffered a severe data breach which included the names of more than 1,000 victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. Could the Cabinet Member update us on the work undertaken by this council in partnership with the PCC to ensure the safeguarding of these residents, as well as to ensure the robustness of this Council's own data systems which hold sensitive information on vulnerable residents?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation

This was a N&S Police data breach and, in conjunction with them, we supported affected individuals where appropriate. As for our own information, we are confident that we have robust controls in place to keep it safe

7.5 Question from Cllr Tim Adams

After hearing of the costs associated with other directly elected leader/mayors elsewhere in the country, residents have been in contact with me about the potential cost to this council in introducing our own DEL? Can the leader outline the potential expense of introducing this new role into our governance?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Governance and Strategy

Our proposed model of devolution does not require the creation of yet another local authority, with all the additional costs this would incur. As stated in the report to Full Council on 12 December 2024, it is expected that a directly elected leader would be supported by the County Council's existing officers and systems. By incorporating functions into the county council we remove the need for the running costs of a separate authority. This contrasts with mayoral combined authorities, which have their own staff and running costs, separate from all the local councils and creating another layer of local government. The election for a DEL in 2025, will cost c. £190,000 for the additional polling cards, postal voting papers and ballot papers. This cost will be mitigated by the capacity funding Government is making available to Norfolk, to support the election. All other costs are accounted for as part of the four-year County Council Election cycle.

7.6 Question from Cllr Saul Penfold

Culture and Arts are a vital component for Norfolk's economy to grow. I was concerned when the news emerged that our Conservative neighbours in Suffolk had opted to cut all investment in the Arts and Culture Sector that the same fate may befall our own sector. How is this Council going to harness the advantages of devolution to secure the future of our culture sector?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

Norfolk County Council has a strong track record for investment in culture and heritage, and we have a national reputation for our work in areas such as creativity and wellbeing. The current discussions with Government about devolution have included culture and heritage. Details of how culture fits within the devolution deal can be found on the Government [website](#) : [Norfolk Devolution Deal](#) (p27). We also continue to meet with the Arm's Length Bodies referenced in the deal text to consider future opportunities for extending our partnerships.

7.7 Question from Cllr Lucy Shires

This council has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to flooding, as the lead flood authority residents have lost confidence in this Council's ability to protect them from the impact of floods. Residents of Happisburgh have been let down by the radio silence from this council. What message does the cabinet member have for these residents whose homes are on the brink and who feel forgotten?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

As a serving County Councillor you will know the Water Management and Highways teams are committed to helping local communities reduce risk/impact where we can. It is not the role of Norfolk County Council to resolve flooding, as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) however, we may investigate the cause and notify any relevant Risk Management Authority and assist residents in finding resolutions where possible.

There is an ongoing investigation into flooding in Happisburgh. Various on-site meetings have taken place during February and March involving both the Highways and Water Management teams. The area is served by a network of riparian owned ditches that are the responsibility of landowners to maintain as well as some highways-maintained assets on Coronation Road. Following the flooding blockages were identified in the ditch network on Coronation Road and work has been undertaken to clear these. Norfolk County Council have provided an initial email update to residents on 27th Feb, a holding statement on 8th March whilst awaiting further information, then subsequent updates were sent on 14th March and 21st March. There has been some subsequent correspondence regarding the Happisburgh Parish Council meetings with a view to a member of the team attending in the future.

7.8 Question from Cllr Mike Smith-Clare

Does the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth agree adequate, affordable, high quality childcare is important to enable parents to be economically active to the benefit of their families and the Norfolk economy, and if so, what discussions has he had with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services about building investment and sufficiency component into both the emerging economic strategy and policies for the provision of childcare in the county?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

We recognise the important link between childcare provision and economic growth, which is why we have been proactive in this area. Norfolk was chosen as one of 16 wraparound pathfinder authorities who worked closely with the Department for Education (DfE) to influence the design of the Wraparound Childcare Scheme. Norfolk has now been identified as one of four local authority areas who are trialling the programme as an early adopter in the summer of 2024 ahead of the national roll out

from September. We have already mapped supply and are currently working with schools to assess demand. We have ambitious plans to create an additional 1,333 places over the next 18 months to support parents back into employment, and will be engaging with schools, childcare providers and other organisations to ensure childcare provision is regular, has longer hours and is more dependable for working parents. Roll out of the early years entitlements for working parents has just started. As with the wraparound scheme we have assessed supply and will continue to work closely with providers to assess demand as it grows over the coming months.

7.9 Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton

At the risk of irritating the Cabinet Member for Children's Services by raising this issue on behalf of my concerned residents for a seventh time, can she tell me if there has been a condition survey done on the Angel Road middle school (owned by the county council and still leased to the Evolution Trust) to ensure the leak in the roof has not been allowed to do even more damage that might slow down its being brought back into use potentially as a SEND school?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

No further condition survey has been undertaken since this question was previously asked. We continue to work with Evolution Trust and consider the future of the buildings. A condition survey is completed at or around the time of return of the buildings. As no firm date has been set, it would not be appropriate to repeat this exercise at present.

Supplementary question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton

Will she assure me that she will insist the building is returned to the county in the condition it was in when the lease was first granted in accordance with the terms of the lease?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The terms of the lease do entitle the County Council to require return of buildings as they were at the time of the forming of the lease. However, there is discretion allowed for consideration of the best use of public funds, and in particular, those prioritised for the benefit of teaching and learning for children and young people in Norfolk.

7.10 Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham

In the light of the overrun in the Heartsease roundabout scheme local businesses trade has been adversely affected for yet another month. Although he ruled out compensation for losses caused by the initial disruption can the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport give me an estimate of how much extra loss business will endure from the failure to meet the original completion date and what discretionary support and compensation he will make available?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

This is a large-scale project in a very busy area of the city's network but one that is vital to complete – not only to provide much-needed facilities for those walking, wheeling and cycling but, at the same time, to improve the roundabout's currently very poor safety record.

We appreciate the extension to the Heartsease works will add frustration for local people and thank the public for their continued patience as we enter this final phase and will do everything we can to minimise further disruption

The County Council's position of not paying compensation applies throughout the duration of the works and while there is no doubt that these works are disruptive, we are not in a position to comment on financial impacts individual businesses may be experiencing.

7.11 Question from Cllr Colleen Walker

At the last Corporate Select Committee meeting Members were told their involvement in the development of a new economic strategy for Norfolk would be limited to attending workshops for stakeholders and the Member Engagement Working Group on devolution. Neither is appropriate for Council Members to debate their ideas and concerns in public, or consistent with the structure of decision making agreed by Council. Will the Leader ensure members have a full opportunity to influence the development of an economic strategy prior to it being considered by Cabinet and Full Council?

Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance

Workshops to develop Norfolk's economic strategy have taken place in all of Norfolk's Districts and have already benefited from input from hundreds of stakeholders including Members from every local authority in Norfolk and is an important part of the development of the strategy. County council members have already had an initial opportunity to debate the economic strategy in public through the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee on March 13th, and the economic strategy will be brought back to this select committee before it is considered by cabinet and full council. The Member Engagement Working Group provides a further opportunity specifically for County Councillors, and as it does not meet in public, enables all Members to contribute their views and thinking. It is the intention to continue to engage with the MEWG on the emerging themes and priorities, as the strategy develops, and we would encourage any Member who wishes to contribute to participate in those meetings.

7.12 Question from Cllr Mike Sands

Electric buses are unreservedly a good thing but come with consequences. I was pleased to learn concrete pads were installed when St Stephens was revamped to accommodate heavier buses and greater wear at the bus stops. How much additional wear and tear on the roads of Norwich does the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport expect, what steps is he taking to make city roads more resilient and how much extra has been added to the roads maintenance budget for the city to reflect the extra wear and tear from heavier vehicles?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

The concrete layby's installed in St Stephens Street were funded as part of the Transforming Cities funded scheme and considered the likely loading of the buses.

Prior to the advent of electric buses, we have experienced deformation at busier bus stops, due to the static weight of buses and the frequent nature of buses uses the stops. The materials used at St Stephens Street provides greater resistance to general wear and tear of vehicle movements.

The operation of electric buses is not a concern at present in terms of the maintenance of city roads and no additional funding has been set aside specifically for this.

7.13 Question from Cllr Matt Reilly

Lines painted on roads wear much faster than they used to. I understand this is in part because the materials used are often less hard wearing but less damaging to the environment. In turn that means white lines need to be repainted more often to serve their purpose of showing road users and pedestrians how to use the roads safely. What steps has the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport taken to increase repainting of white lines to compensate for the quicker wearing of lines painted with less resilient materials?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

We currently use thermoplastic materials for most of our white lining programme and the specification has not changed. Locations with heavy turning vehicular movements will naturally wear out quicker.

We regularly review new material developments and are currently trialling a methyl-methacrylate (MMA) line marking paint on high wearing locations on the Norwich outer ring road following recent surfacing schemes. The material is hard wearing and should last longer. These sites will be monitored to help inform whether this new material should be used at other higher wearing locations.

7.14 Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby

As welcome as the extension of the Household Support fund is, we know there are children in Norfolk already going hungry. When the fund comes to an end in the autumn, families will be facing even greater challenges to feed their children. How much has the Cabinet Member for Children's Services allocated in her departmental budget or can call on directly from other funding to introduce new support measures to ensure Norfolk children don't go hungry?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

We know that many of our residents and families are struggling with increased costs and we are responding as a whole council given this is not an issue just for Children's Services. However, as is the same financial reality for local authorities across the country, Norfolk County Council cannot replicate the Hardship Support Fund should this cease to be supported by additional funding from central government beyond the current extension period. We do not know what central government's intentions are for the Hardship Support Fund beyond September. For this reason, we will continue to lobby central government for a fair deal for Norfolk residents including the need for ongoing financial support beyond the current extension period of the Hardship Support Fund so that we can assist families experiencing cost of living challenges.

The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in Norfolk plays a vital role in supporting and improving the lives of people in the county. This is why as a Council we are maintaining our Empowering Communities Partnership Infrastructure grant. In 2021, we committed to increase our core grant of £172k to £250k for 3 years, recognising the additional pressures facing the VCSE sector post-pandemic and due to the cost of living crisis. The Empowering Communities Partnership provides ongoing support, advice and resources to Norfolk's VCSE organisations. Our teams will continue to engage with families and enable them to be aware of and where needed, connect them with the increasing network of community supermarkets/stores which have been supporting around 22,000 people from over 8,500 households across the county as part of the Nourishing Norfolk network, alongside local food banks and community groups that help to ensure that the wider support that families might need is available.

We are using £6.4m of transformation funding from the Department for Education to strengthen our early help and partnership working to support for families through our Start for Life and family hubs programme and we know that good nutrition in children starts from before birth. Working with partners, our Start for Life offer is focused on all babies, children and families being supported and empowered to have a healthy, happy and safe start for life, ensuring they flourish before birth and beyond. This includes support to enable infant feeding and increase breast feeding rates, especially in our more deprived communities. As part of this, we are operating an enhanced breastfeeding equipment loan offer across the county, have launched an infant feeding community grant scheme to support VCSE organisations within local communities to complement midwifery, health visitor and GP input, and secured agreement across Norfolk's three Acute Trusts and our Healthy Child Programme services to enhance families' access to effective peer support.

Through the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance, a multi-agency working group is focusing on children's nutrition as part of our shared commitment to Norfolk being a place where all children and young people can flourish. We know there is a wide range of local projects and initiatives focused on supporting good nutrition in children, including the work of our Adult Learning Service who provide family focused courses through their Family Learning programme including 'Cooking on a budget', 'My first solid foods' and 'Healthy Food and Mind'.

We are continuing to promote take up of free school meals and, with almost 100% take up, there are currently just over 31,500 children who access means tested free school meals at a weekly cost of approximately £475,000. This is in addition to all children in Year Reception, 1 and 2 who automatically receive free school meals.

As a council we are also maintaining our commitment to operate our Client Hardship Service which can support families with money management and budgeting advice, and provide financial assistance for food, energy, water and other essential household items.

7.15 Question from Cllr Brenda Jones

Having refused to say what thresholds will apply for assessing the results of the MiG consultation the administration has not made it clear the omission of an option not to

apply the MIG cut is because they are only consulting on the impact, not the principle of the cut. Having confused matters further by not sending documents to the right people, the whole exercise looks shambolic, made worse by Cabinet hiding behind the consultation and refusing to discuss the issues - which surely should be the purpose of any consultation. If Cabinet persists with this risky and damaging proposal will you please scrap this flawed consultation and do it properly?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Thank you for your question.

As per the Council's constitution there is no predetermined criteria or threshold set in relation to the Council's decision-making process and no decision about the MIG will be made until the consultation has ended and Cabinet has reviewed all the evidence, and this includes the findings from the public consultation. As part of this consultation, we have contacted people that will be directly affected, and we have also welcomed the support of wider groups and organisations to help share this message. I want to encourage as many people as possible to engage with and contribute to this consultation. The consultation asks people about two potential options and there are a range of responses people can make.

No decision will be made until the consultation has ended and Cabinet has reviewed all the evidence. We will take a report about the findings of this consultation to July Cabinet.

My fellow Cabinet Councillors and I will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully when making our decision we will consider.

I would encourage everyone to take part and there are several ways people can take part in the consultation:

- Complete the questionnaire online at <https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/>
- Online at www.norfolk.gov.uk/savingsproposals
- By email at haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk
- By post, writing to:
 - The Minimum Income Guarantee Consultation 2024/25
 - Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK
 - Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing
 - County Hall, Martineau Lane. Norwich, NR1 2DH.
- Email the dedicated team directly at charging.policy@norfolk.gov.uk or call the dedicated telephone helpline 01603 306864 which is open 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

7.16 Question from Cllr Steve Morphew

When the administration asks the Government to cover the £47m already spent on the proposed Norwich Western Link that won't get a bat license to proceed and therefore no planning permission, the Government will quite rightly expect to see what steps have been taken to find alternative solutions to ensure public money already spent is not wasted. Will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport now reopen the options appraisal process with a view to revising and resubmitting the Outline Business Case to exclude the current scheme and provide alternatives that solve the problems to the west of Norwich and ensure value for public money already spent?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport

A planning application is about to be submitted and the merits of the Scheme will be considered as part of the planning process.

A protected species license would only be granted by Natural England following the granting of planning permission. The project team will continue to discuss our proposals with Natural England as part of the planning process with the aim of finding a solution which would enable the necessary protected species licenses to be granted by Natural England should planning permission be granted for the Scheme.

Other options to address the traffic problems to the west of Norwich were investigated and discounted prior to the adoption of the preferred route which is considered to be the best solution to resolve the problems.

Should planning permission for the Scheme not be granted then we would need to consider if other measures could be implemented but without a higher standard route in place, we would not expect these to significantly improve the existing issues and deliver all the objectives of the Norwich Western Link project.

7.17 Question from Cllr Terry Jermy

Putting solar panels on rooftops across Norfolk can help us to generate the clean electricity we need, while cutting our carbon emissions and sparing land for food, farming and nature. Will the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste sign the Campaign to Protect Rural England's 'rooftop revolution' petition which calls for rooftop solar, rather than solar farms on behalf of Norfolk County Council?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

The County Council supports and encourages the development of rooftop solar in Norfolk. Rooftop solar is being rolled out across many of the council's own buildings through our Future Ready programme of building improvement works. Furthermore, funding has been allocated through the Norfolk Investment Framework to the 'Norwich solar system' project run by Norwich Business Improvement District. This ambitious project aims to kickstart the UK's largest urban solar farm on city rooftops through coordinating a pooled approach that helps share costs of developing rooftop solar in the city and increase bargaining power to drive better value.

As the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) itself recognises, rooftop solar alone will not be sufficient to meet our solar energy requirements. Solar developments on land can bring clean energy at scale in a fast and cost-effective way to help the country towards its energy resilience and net zero goals and to reduce energy costs. That said, it is important that such solar developments are located carefully with consideration of other land-use pressures such as food production, housing and habitat protection.

Many of the CPRE's asks from their 'Shout from the rooftops' report which the petition is based on focus on planning policy and regulations, and the County Council is not the local planning authority for buildings or solar farms.

Cabinet

Item No: 8

Report Title: Council Delivery Plan 2024-5 and Annual Review 2023-4

Date of Meeting: 8 May 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Kay Mason Billig (Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy & Governance)

Responsible Director: Paul Cracknell, Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation

Is this a Key Decision? Yes

If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 21 March 2024

Executive Summary

In November 2021 Norfolk County Council formally adopted its new strategy, *Better Together, for Norfolk 2021-2025* as part of its policy framework. At the same time the Council committed to develop an annual Corporate Delivery Plan (this year renamed to Council Delivery Plan) to provide a cross-organisational view of the critical activities that contribute to the delivery of our overall strategy.

The Council Delivery Plan is refreshed and reviewed on a yearly basis. At the same time, the previous year's Delivery Plan is reviewed, resulting in the publication of an Annual Review. Both documents are published together.

This paper presents as appendices the Council Delivery Plan for 2024-5 as well as the Annual Review for 2023-4, the latter of which illustrates some of the key achievements of the Council during this period.

These include:

- Agreeing a devolution deal which will bring additional powers and funding to the county.
- Serving over 1.8 million visitors across our 47 libraries
- Processing over 60,000 tonnes of recycling through our household recycling centres.

- Our work to reduce carbon emissions by 15%, meaning we are now half our 2016/2017 baseline, in addition, our Climate Strategy has received national recognition by Climate Emergency UK.
- Our work to improve digital connectivity, delivering ultra-fast broadband to over 6,900 premises and secured £114m+ of funding to connect further properties.
- Reducing our backlog of people awaiting full care following hospital by 93%.

All of which have been delivered against the ongoing context of significant financial pressures and increasing demand – particularly for Children’s and Adult Services. Despite these challenges, the local authority has delivered a balanced budget for financial year 2024-2025.

For the coming year – again, set against a challenging financial backdrop – our Council Delivery Plan outlines our intention to set out a new Economic Strategy for Norfolk, key infrastructural projects in highways and the ongoing rollout of Project Gigabit, as well as a wide range of other key activities across the span of the organisation. More detail on these activities can be found in section 3.8.

Recommendations:

- 1. Approve the Council Delivery Plan for 2024-5**
- 2. Agree that the Plan will form the basis of the next Annual Review to be published in May 2025**
- 3. Agree the Annual Review for 2023-4**

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 Norfolk County Council’s Strategy (*Better Together, for Norfolk*) and annual Council Delivery Plans represent the highest-level strategic products within the Council’s Strategic Framework. The Framework serves to provide a clear line from the organisation’s priorities and ambitions to service delivery. These are aligned to the administration’s manifesto pledges and reflect both national policy and the local operating context and challenges.
- 1.2 These documents sit alongside the NCC Performance Management Framework which provides oversight on the most corporately significant metrics: our ‘vital signs’.
- 1.3 The Council Delivery Plan presents a single, whole-council view of the key activities which reflect our priorities for the coming business planning cycle (24-5), as well as our response to central government policy, and work to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of how we operate. It is necessarily selective and does not cover every single piece of work taking place across Norfolk County Council, but provides a high-level view of the most important work planned against each of our strategic priorities:

- A vibrant and sustainable economy
- Better opportunities for children and young people
- Healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives
- Strong, engaged, and inclusive communities
- A greener, more resilient future

1.4 The Annual Report presents a brief progress update against each of the key activities identified in the previous year's Plan (23-4).

2. Norfolk County Council's Strategic Framework

2.1 The Strategic Framework consists of the following documents:

- Better Together, for Norfolk, the council's high-level strategy, which runs from 2021-2025.
- The Council Delivery Plan, which provides a progress update on key priorities and is refreshed and reported on annually.
- Departmental strategies and plans, which sit within each department and align to our overall Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Plans on a Page, which are developed annually and sit within the level deemed appropriate within departments. These delivery focussed documents summarise key priorities and activities that take place across a team.
- Personal Development Plans, which are agreed between line managers and their direct reports.

2.2 The Framework collectively functions to promote alignment across the organisation from the very high-level vision and goals, right down to the contribution of individuals.

3. Council Delivery Plan 2024-5

3.1 The appended Council Delivery Plan 2024-5 sets out the council's key activities over the coming business planning cycle.

3.2 The activities contained within the Plan are those which have the most significance for the organisation. They include:

- Areas of significant service activity (e.g., transformational changes in service delivery and business change projects, new services, etc.).
- Significant commissioning activities for infrastructure (e.g. highways, property, digital) and people services (e.g., children's, adults, and public health services).

- Capital delivery (e.g., delivering new education, property and community assets in our capital programme).
 - Strategy and policy development (e.g., new strategies, responding to changes in national policy, and influencing government).
- 3.3 Essential day-to-day service delivery is captured in departmental plans and plans-on-a-page.
- 3.4 In addition to the five strategic priorities, the section on "Improving the Way We Work" includes the activities which cut across many areas of our work and aim to improve efficiency within the organisation.
- 3.5 Departments remain responsible for the implementation or adaption (subject to direction from the Cabinet lead) of the key activities in the Council Delivery Plan. This Plan brings these activities into one place to aid the council's focus on delivering and reporting on its strategic priorities.
- 3.6 The Council Delivery Plan is owned by the Leader, Cabinet, and Executive Directors. It has been developed in collaboration with Departmental teams and business planning leads.
- 3.7 The Council Delivery Plan 2024-5 will be reviewed and reported on at the start of the next business planning cycle in May 2025.
- 3.8 The council delivery plan is positioned against the context of the significant pressures we face both on our services in terms of increasing demand, as well as our finances which continue to experience sustained reductions in funding from central government. Despite that context, the council continues to deliver significant activity in line with its key priorities, such as:
- Launch our new Economic Strategy for Norfolk and continue to integrate Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions.
 - Continue to deliver key infrastructure projects for Norfolk's residents, including the Norwich Western Link (NWL), A140 Long Stratton bypass, and improvements to the A47.
 - Work to improve digital connectivity, through continuing to roll out ultra-fast broadband to our hardest to reach rural areas.
 - Lead as a strategic convenor on flooding issues, pushing for legislative changes to help us be more effective as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).
 - Deliver a Communities Strategy, setting out how we will use our existing assets better to deliver a relevant and joined up wraparound service.

4. Annual Review 2023-4

- 4.1 This year's Annual Review provides a concise summary of the progress made during 2023-4 on an activity-by-activity basis. Each activity identified in the 2023-4 Corporate Delivery Plan has a response worked up in collaboration with the relevant Directorate and operational leads that shows the most important aspects and achievements of the work undertaken during the past year.
- 4.2 The Annual Review is compiled from a high-level perspective for reporting purposes, with only key details and headlines included. As such it does not represent the totality of work undertaken by the council on any given activity.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The financial context for the Strategy and Council Delivery Plan is set through our annual budget planning process and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1 **Staff:** None foreseen
- 6.2 **Property:** None foreseen
- 6.3 **IT:** The two documents, if agreed, will need to be uploaded in an accessible format to the council's website under the Strategy and Policies section.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 **Legal Implications:** None foreseen
- 7.2 **Human Rights Implications:** None foreseen
- 7.3 **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):** The Council Delivery Plan consolidates projects and business activity required to deliver our strategy, *Better Together, for Norfolk*. Each project is distinct in its own right and will have a different level of impact on people with protected characteristics and the armed forces, depending on its nature and focus. All project managers and business leads are therefore required to ensure that due regard is given to equality duty in designing, reporting on and delivering their activities. If any negative impacts are identified that cannot be mitigated, these will be reported to Cabinet for determination.
- 7.4 **Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):** None foreseen
- 7.5 **Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):** None foreseen
- 7.6 **Sustainability implications (where appropriate):** None foreseen
- 7.7 **Any Other Implications:** None foreseen

8. Risk Implications / Assessment

- 8.1 Prioritising key activities to ensure understanding of, and focus on, what is critical within the council strategy is the major feature of the Council Delivery

Plan. This prioritisation process provides clarity to staff and our residents about what matters to the council and also provides a manageable set of strategic activities for Cabinet and Leadership to monitor throughout the year.

- 8.2 The council maintains a Corporate Risk Register that identifies the most significant corporate and strategic risks. It contains details of the principal risks to the achievement of the objectives of our strategy. Each of these risks is assessed for likelihood and impact, and has a responsible owner and programme of mitigating actions/controls. The register is updated throughout the year and reported quarterly to Cabinet.

9. Recommendations

1. Approve the Council Delivery Plan for 2024-5
2. Agree that the Plan will form the basis of the next Annual Review at the start of the business planning cycle
3. Agree the Annual Review for 2023-4

10. Background Papers

10.1 [Better Together, for Norfolk, 2021-2025](#)

10.2 [Corporate Delivery Plan 2023-2024](#)

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.



► COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-2025

A look at Norfolk County Council's key activities for the coming year.

BETTER TOGETHER, FOR NORFOLK





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▶ **LEADER'S FOREWORD**

As I start my second year as Leader, which is also the last for this administration before the County Council elections in May 2025, I cannot help but feel extremely proud for what we have achieved together over the past year, and also fiercely ambitious for the future, even in the face of the challenges that continue to lie ahead.

Looking at last year's Annual Review against our key strategic priorities within our strategy [Better Together, for Norfolk 2021-2025](#), which is published alongside this plan, I am in awe of how much we do to improve the lives of our residents, communities and businesses, and how much resilience we show in the face of ongoing change and uncertainty.



As an organisation with a gross revenue budget of nearly £2bn and countless statutory responsibilities, many of our functions and activities will remain the same from year to year, as will many of our programmes of change, which are aligned to our current strategy. And as we start to think how we might refresh our strategy beyond 2025, we have the opportunity to hone down on what is important for Norfolk's residents, ensuring we deliver a programme of work which links to the core priorities for the county, continues to support those most vulnerable in our communities, and delivers value for money.

We are proud that we continue to be a well-run and well-managed Council, which has balanced its books year after year, improving the way we work and delivering budgeted savings of £170m in the past 4 years. A significant achievement given the challenging financial conditions experienced by local authorities – more information is on this below.

Over the past year in particular, we have focused on streamlining our structures to remove duplication, automating processes where possible, and using new technology to help us anticipate need and provide people with support earlier. Promoting a culture of continuous improvement has been and continues to be essential for driving changes within our services and finding better ways of doing things wherever possible.

It is important to be absolutely honest about the financial context in which we have set our plans and our budget for 2024-25. With central government currently unable to commit to improving local government funding, and with unprecedented levels of demand for our services, driven by our demographics and an increased cost of living, we will have to prioritise and make the most of our resources. Be in no doubt though, that we continue to press to government the significant financial pressures facing us, both through national bodies such as the Local Government Association and County Council's Network, as well as through our local MPs.

Financial pressures aside, the year ahead is also cause for optimism. In December 2023, Council Members voted to endorse the proposed Devolution Deal for Norfolk which brings an investment fund worth £600 million over 30 years, with additional powers and devolved funding for, transport, brownfield regeneration, local skills, plus further opportunities to expand the deal. In July 2024, Councillors will vote on the change of governance needed for a Level 3 deal, which offers Norfolk a generational opportunity not only to unlock long-term funding, but also to gain greater freedoms to decide how best to meet local needs here, in Norfolk, and not in Whitehall.

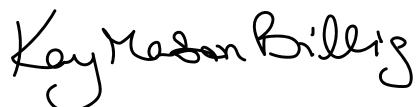


Alongside this, we will set out our new Economic Strategy for Norfolk, which is being developed with other local councils and our partners in business, education and the voluntary sector. This strategy will drive current and future investment, ensuring we are spending precious funding on all the right things. The integration of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) into the Council in April 2024 will also strengthen the council's capabilities in supporting economic growth and in attracting further investment into Norfolk.

Our economy though cannot fully thrive without the right infrastructure. So we will also continue to work with partners and government to ensure that key utilities such as energy and water are available for the future of our county; that we build on previous successes to draw down more funding for key projects like dualling the A47, the Norwich Western Link and the Long Stratton by-pass; that we look at how to best address the causes and impact of flooding and coastal erosion in our County; that we continue to deliver the rollout of Project Gigabit, aiming to improve connectivity particularly in our most rural and hard to reach locations; and that we do so while also protecting our unique and precious natural heritage.

In setting out our priorities for the next year, let me be clear: this high-level document does not describe all the work that takes place across the council - to do so would be almost impossible. Instead, it focuses on our most significant priorities, our programmes of transformation, the work that will have the most impact on how we deliver services and how we work with our residents, our partners and other sectors. So as we go into the final year of delivery on Better Together, for Norfolk, and also look into the future, I would encourage everyone to read our plan, be aware of all the good work that continues to be done, and be assured of our unwavering commitment to make Norfolk the best it can be.

With best wishes,



Kay Mason Billig, Leader

▶ INTRODUCTORY CONTEXT

The Council continues to face challenging circumstances over the next year, due to factors including delayed inflationary pressures on service costs, increasing demand on our services, and significant shortfalls in public funding. Despite a late injection of funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in January 2024, we anticipate that our resources will remain stretched into 2024/25, presenting a significant ongoing challenge.

We are mindful of longer-term trends in Norfolk that will affect delivery of our core services, such as an ageing population and more people living with poor health for longer. Similarly to 2023/24, we expect to see a continuing demand for support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and a sharp increase in the cost of provision of home-to-school transport.

Despite this difficult operating context, we continue to invest in the continued delivery of our two key people-focused multi-year partnership strategies - Promoting Independence for working age adults with learning and physical disabilities and for older people, and [Flourishing in Norfolk](#), for children and young people. We continue to prioritise funding of our frontline services and transformation programmes, and also to put significant resource into prevention and early help, implementing innovative approaches to identify those at risk of falling into crisis, and utilising technology to better support our residents in their homes and with their families.

As we continue to make the case to government for fairer funding, we also continue to build upon our successful local track record of working collaboratively with central government, public sector organisations, local partners and business communities to identify opportunities for additional funding and to maximise our influence and impact.

This year, we have seen a significant shift in the Council's role in delivering economic growth and business support through the transfer of functions from Local Enterprise Partnerships into local authorities. This means that, from 1 April 2024, business support functions, the growth hub and a number of key government programmes, previously delivered through the New Anglia LEP, will now be delivered by the Council.



On 26 October 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act, establishing formally the legal framework for Norfolk's devolution deal. In line with past commitments from Government to strengthen and deepen devolution in England, the Chancellor announced a new 'Level 4' of the devolution framework in the Autumn Statement held on 22 November 2023. This framework reflects the progress in devolving decisions and functions, and devolved institutions with a directly elected leader will be able to draw down from this, securing deeper powers. We have always said that devolution is a journey not a single event, and this framework and the deals we are seeing elsewhere, set out a ambitious roadmap for Norfolk to achieve its ambitions.

The current and future impacts of climate change, globally, nationally and within Norfolk remains a key concern, with coastal erosion and flooding representing a real and growing risk to our county. We are committed to the government's goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions and to mitigate the impact in Norfolk. We are exploring clean energy projects throughout Norfolk and will continue to respond to consultations proposing changes to the energy network, highlighting the need to minimise negative impacts on Norfolk's environments and communities, while identifying opportunities for us to take full advantage of the benefits for our residents.

Our Climate Strategy sets out priorities relating to energy, our support for national decarbonisation, and the expansion of renewable energy. It covers the close relationship between climate action and nature recovery, jobs and growth opportunities from the expanding green economy, and how adaptation is needed to protect our local services and communities. We are now also developing a green energy plan.

Within this operating context, this year's delivery plan – the last one under our current strategy - sets out the key activities which help us deliver on our strategic priorities, outlined in Better Together, For Norfolk 2021-2025. Over the next year, we will be reviewing our focus for the future, both in the context of the anticipated General Election in Autumn 2024 and the County Council elections in May 2025.



▶ **FINANCIAL CONTEXT**

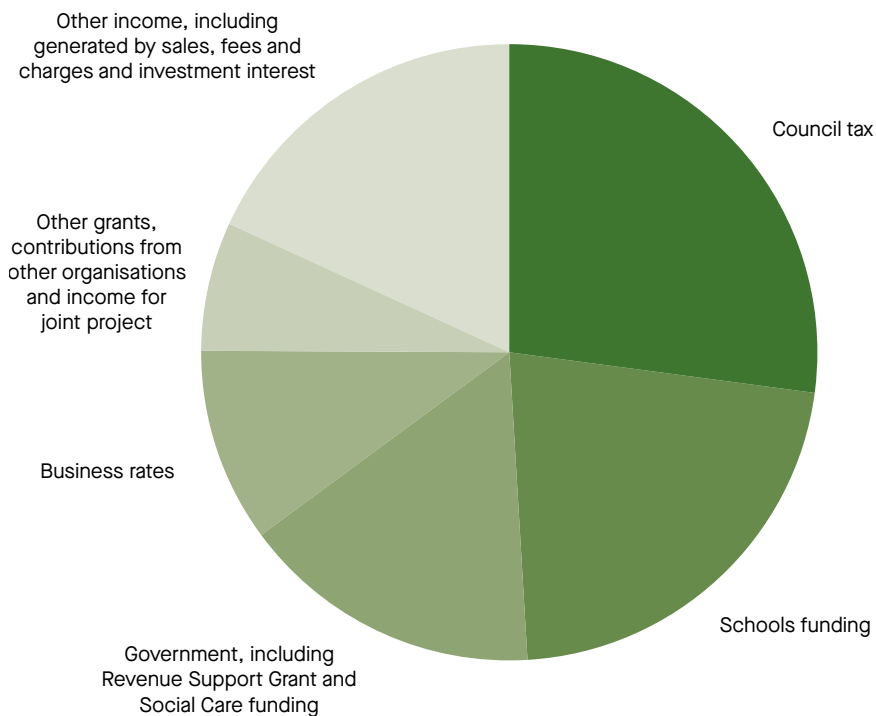
Between 2010-11 and 2019-20 our grant funding from the government has reduced by £220m. Since that time, government funding has stabilised but overall funding levels have not recovered in real terms.

The Council continues to face significant cost pressures driven by (among other factors) increased levels of demand, legislative changes such as the increase National Living Wage which was not funded and has had an effect across our cost base, late changes to the local government settlement, and the impact of high levels of inflation in recent years. Although inflation has dropped significantly, the cost of service delivery and of borrowing remains higher, and therefore the Council must continue to focus its funds and resources on the right activities, to maintain a robust and sustainable financial position.

The graph below sets out at a glance what the council's annual spend looks like, both in terms of the money coming into the local authority from a variety of sources as well as how we then allocate and spend this funding.

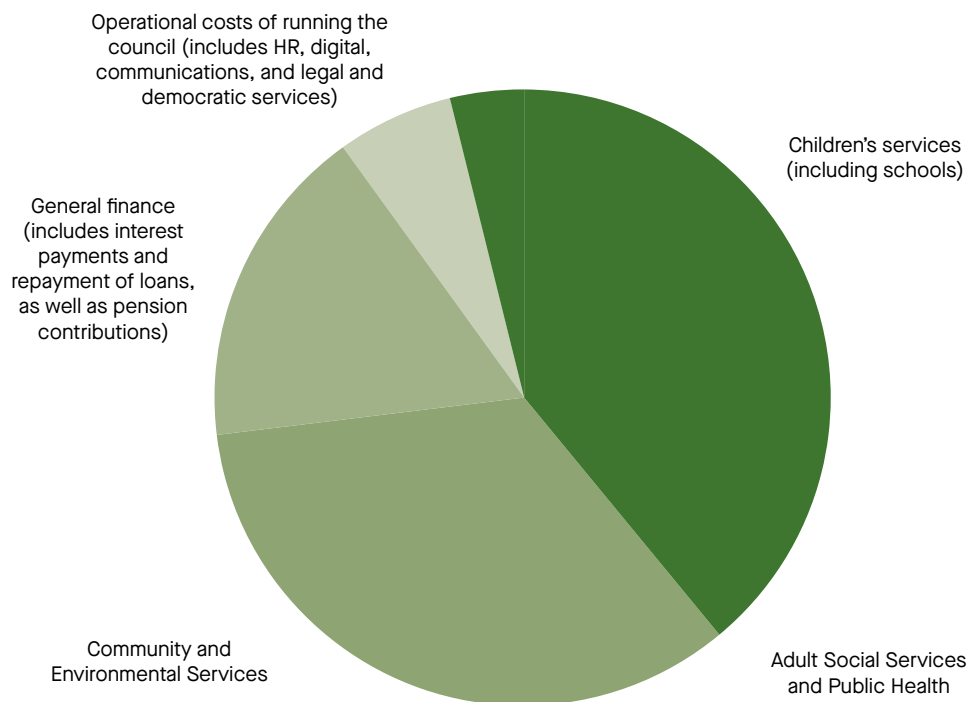
Where the money comes from:

- 27% Council tax
- 22% Schools funding
- 16% Government grants, including Revenue Support Grant and social care funding
- 10% Business rates
- 7% Other grants, contributions and income for joint projects
- 18% Other income, including sales, fees, charges, and investment interest



Where the money is spent:

- 39% Children's services (including schools)
- 34% Adult Social Services and Public Health
- 17% Community and Environmental Services
- 6% General finance (includes interest payments and repayment of loans, as well as pension contributions)
- 4% Operational costs of running the council (includes HR, digital, communications, and legal and democratic services)





OUR STRATEGY

The Council's strategy [Better Together, for Norfolk 2021-25](#), has 5 strategic priorities:



A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

– supporting skills, high value jobs, growth, investment and infrastructure



BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

– improved outcomes for families, better educational attainment and more employment opportunities for young people



HEALTHY, FULFILLING AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

– levelling up health outcomes, living well and better local services



STRONG, ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

– more participation, capacity building and empowerment of communities



A GREENER, MORE RESILIENT FUTURE

– protecting and enhancing the environment, access to quality spaces and community resilience



▶ OUR VALUES

In 2024 we completed our work to refresh our organisational values, which were developed by NCC's leaders and employees. These are:



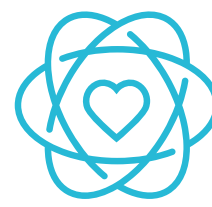
Ambitious



Accountable



Trusted



Inclusive

These values, developed in 2023 with senior leaders and employees, represent the core beliefs that drive our behaviour at work, provide us with a common sense of purpose and belonging, and define our culture – the way we want to be, even when no one is watching. Our values act as guiding principles for everything that we do, and set the tone for our interactions and relationships with our customers, employees and other stakeholders, and all our communities.



▶ A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Set out in our strategy, [Better Together, For Norfolk 2021-2025](#), this first priority includes the key aims to encourage growth within Norfolk's economy and move us towards a higher-wage, higher skilled workforce where more value is added within the county.

Following Government direction that from April 2024 all Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions would be merged into tier-one authorities, work has begun to integrate the New Anglia LEP with Norfolk County Council.

The council has a key leadership role to help drive up skills, wages, and productivity in the local economy, to promote growth and investment, as well as deliver infrastructure and digital connectivity improvements.

We look to our internal performance information, as mentioned below, to provide indicators that our activities are having the desired impact, but also track local economic data such as our Gross Value Added (GVA), rates of employment, and narrowing the gap between the Norfolk and national average wages.

While some of this data is outside our immediate influence and control, it provides us with a more complete picture of economic activity across the county and thus is helpful for tracking our progress. The below activities represent an overview of the work being undertaken on how we are doing this.

Key activity:

1. Building on the work done in 2023, and subject to agreement by our elected members, we will implement our plans to deliver Norfolk's devolution deal, to support economic growth, improve skills and deliver better infrastructure. Delivery of the deal will be in partnership with our District Councils, business and education providers, through a number of strategic boards that will shape strategy and investment. We will also work with Government to develop the roadmap to a Level 4 deal to deepen devolution and draw down significant additional benefits for our county.
2. We will develop an Economic Strategy for Norfolk, which will form a blueprint to underpin the activities of Norfolk County Council and key partners to enable and deliver economic growth. The strategy will be developed through engagement with a significant number of stakeholders including the local business community, district councils, and local Members of Parliament.
3. We will provide support for businesses, bringing together Norfolk County Council and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership programmes into a strengthened package, which offers clear advice and funding opportunities for businesses.
4. We will deliver employment and skills support for Norfolk's residents including publishing a new plan for adult learning. We will develop and deliver a suite of programmes to suit the skills needs of employers and residents in the county.



5. We will work to improve transport connectivity through the delivery of our Local Transport Plan and individual plans for Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth and market towns. We will also seek to deliver improvements to major transport infrastructure such as the A47, West Winch Housing Access Road, and oversee construction of the Long Stratton Bypass. We will continue to develop the Norwich Western Link, which is a key infrastructure scheme for Norfolk. We recently secured £213m in Government funding for the cost of developing and delivering the scheme, and we will continue to make representations to Government for full funding for the remainder of the scheme.
6. We will deliver our comprehensive programme to maintain and repair Norfolk's roads, footways, cycleways, and trails, focussing on proactive maintenance wherever possible, and planning strategically to deploy the £40m a year integrated transport settlement secured through the devolution deal.
7. We will help get our residents across the county online, by continuing our work to improve digital connectivity. Part of this work includes the delivery of Better Broadband for Norfolk, which will roll out high-speed broadband to our remaining hardest-to-reach communities, including those in non-commercially viable areas. We will continue to make representations to government to improve the mobile signal countywide through the Shared Rural Network.
8. We will bring together partners and ensure a strategic approach is taken in future utilities planning, ensuring that plans are developed with key stakeholders and utility providers to plan availability of energy and water for future population growth.
9. We will open the Operations & Maintenance campus in Great Yarmouth – this will include training and upskilling for Norfolk's residents, helping support delivery of infrastructure to support key future growth sectors such as offshore wind.
10. We will promote Norfolk as a top destination for inward investment and tourism in association with Visit East of England, in partnership with whom we will put forward a bid to become a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) with an ambition to be the most sustainable tourist destination in the country. We will also focus on promoting Norfolk as an attractive place to start a business and as a place with opportunities for skilled individuals.



Measuring our performance

These selected performance measures demonstrate whether our activity and interventions are having the desired outcomes. They will not always directly align with our key activity as set out in this plan.

To see how we are performing against these measures, this report should be read alongside the council's full list of performance measures which are [publicly available at our Cabinet meetings](#).

- Number of education and training enrolments
- Library Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) activity
- People supported to start or grow a business
- % of high priority highway defects dealt with within timescales
- % of properties with access to Superfast Broadband (>24mbps)
- % of properties with access to Ultrafast Broadband (>100mbps)
- % of 4G coverage



BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our second priority recognises that children and young people are the future of the county and that we want to them to have the best possible start in life.

It is with this intent that we co-produced our partnership strategy, [Flourishing in Norfolk](#), which brings together organisations who are working to change the lives of children and young people for the better.

The activities below further build on our key aims set out within [Better Together, For Norfolk](#) and Flourishing in Norfolk, around the themes of improving outcomes for families, raising educational attainment for children and young people, and creating better employment opportunities for them.

As with the above priority, we also track wider educational attainment outcomes, such as A-level results, local literacy and numeracy, as well as our number of apprentices to help inform and shape our activities where we can have some degree of control over the results.

Key activity:

- 1.** We will ensure that all children have access to and participate in education, by working with our key education partners, including schools and settings in Norfolk and with the Department for Education (DfE).
- 2.** We will drive better outcomes for children and young people with SEND by building on our system-wide Local First Inclusion approach and preparing for our first inspection under the Area SEND inspection framework. We will help intervene earlier and more holistically to prevent escalation of need, focusing on how we incentivise and increase mainstream inclusion practice.

3. We will progress our ambitious goal of enabling more local children to have their special educational needs met in Norfolk by working with Department for Education to progress the implementation of two new special schools in Great Yarmouth and Downham Market.
4. We will work to sustain the improvements of “Good” in all areas following our Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) and work towards “Outstanding”.
5. We will work proactively with stakeholders in planning for areas with demographic change, and ensure sufficient school places for children in Norfolk as well as efficient use of resources and value for money.
6. Following direction set out following consultation set out on the Government’s [Stable Homes, Built on Love Strategy](#), we will move forward with implementing children’s social care reforms to improve the experience of families seeking help. This includes embedding the ‘Family Help’ model to enable professionals, including our social workers, to work more flexibly to meet the needs of children and families.
7. We will work collaboratively with partners, strengthening our approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing, and build a partnership approach to supporting neurodiversity.
8. We will work with partners in the education system to deliver the initial plans of the Learning Ambition for Norfolk as part of the programme of work over the coming 3-5 years to support significant improvement in learning outcomes for children and young people.
9. We will deliver better quality, local and affordable care provision by working to increase recruitment and retention of foster carers, create more specialist provision for those children with SEND, and offer innovative approaches to help young people remain with their families.
10. We will implement our newly agreed Apprenticeship Strategy which will promote better collaboration between all areas of the council with regards to the recruitment, deployment and development of apprentices. All directorates will continue to collaborate and deliver increased activities in working towards all strategic aims, including a focus on green apprenticeships which help deliver on Net Zero priorities.



Measuring our performance

These selected performance measures demonstrate whether our activity and interventions are having the desired outcomes. They will not always directly align with our key activity as set out in this plan.

To see how we are performing against these measures, this plan should be read alongside the council's full list of performance measures which are [publicly available at our Cabinet meetings](#).

- Education Inclusion
- Effective Practice
- Avoiding specialist intervention
- Early intervention and prevention
- Managing the market and creating capacity



▶ HEALTHY, FULFILLING, AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

Good health is the key to living well and staying independent. We want everyone in Norfolk to have the opportunity to live their lives to the full and have access to the right support, when they need it.

As our overarching strategy sets out, this starts by creating better health outcomes and focussing on prevention rather than cure, as well as supporting people with their wellbeing where this may be a barrier to enjoying life, completing education, or holding down a job.

We also place an emphasis on helping our residents live well by promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting people to make healthy choices. We believe that this, combined with delivering better local services are key to helping people in Norfolk live happily, healthily, and independently.

While again we are part of a wider system and have limited impact to directly influence health outcomes, we monitor county level data such as healthy life expectancy (the number of years people typically live in good health), obesity rates, and the prevalence of substance misuse in order to help inform our decisions taken in these areas.

Some of the key activity for how we plan to deliver on this strategic priority over the next year is set out below.

Key activity:

1. We will offer preventative support to help people to live independently for as much and as long as possible, utilising assistive technology and other resources. We have published our refreshed Promoting Independence strategy, setting out our plan to do this.



2. In addition to the above, we will work closely with carers and NHS, district council, and voluntary sector partners, to provide greater choice and control of how people meet their care needs closer to home.
3. We will make the best use of technology to enable people to get information and assessments faster, launching online self-assessments and dedicated portals for people who use our services.
4. We will implement our new Learning Disabilities and Autism plan for Norfolk, which focuses on improving wraparound services for people with learning disabilities, autism, and other elements of neurodivergence.
5. We will continue to deliver the Independent Living and Supported Living housing programmes, including at Swallowtail Place, and work with partners to explore opportunities that arise from devolution of brownfield funding in Norfolk to identify and develop specialist housing sites that would not have been otherwise possible.
6. We will fulfil our duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to improve the quality of support being provided to victim-survivors living in safe accommodation in Norfolk, including integrating our duty around domestic abuse as a key priority for the Norfolk Strategic Housing Partnership.
7. In absence of wider reform from Government, we will continue to work with the care market to drive improvement and improve stability for residents requiring care.
8. We will play a key leadership role in the Integrated Care System working with the NHS and other partners and deliver a strategic health action plan outlining NCC's role in improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, with a specific focus on prevention. The plan will support a 'health in all policies' approach across NCC, including how all departments create the conditions for healthy lives and are delivering to the system's priorities identified in Integrated Care Strategy.
9. We will provide Public Health Services including [Ready to Change](#) which aims to support residents to eat more healthily and become more active, and the Wellbeing Programme which encourages residents to make healthier life choices.



10. We will continue to collaborate with key partners in the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership to deliver positive local outcomes around reducing drug use, drug-related deaths, crime and harm, as well as reducing drug supply and increasing engagement with treatment and recovery. We will also continue to deliver Project ADDER, which is a key part of the government's 10-year drugs strategy, From Harm to Hope.

Measuring our performance

These selected performance measures demonstrate whether our activity and interventions are having the desired outcomes, but it should be noted that they will not always directly align with our key activity as set out in this plan.

To see how we are performing against these measures, this plan should be read alongside the council's full list of performance measures which are [publicly available at our Cabinet meetings](#).

- Maximised independence for those who draw on services (%)
- Reduce and delay the need for formal social care (%)
- Managing our safeguarding work effectively
- Quality of the Care Market
- Number/Percentage of eligible people offered & receiving an NHS Health Check
- Healthy Life Expectancy (Female)
- Healthy Life Expectancy (Male)
- Number of eligible people offered and receiving and NHS health check
- Smoking prevalence
- Increase in Active Adults



► **STRONG, ENGAGED, AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES**

We are proud of Norfolk’s strong sense of identity and place. Our mixed rural and urban communities each have their own character and we have a role in helping support and empower these communities to help themselves.

Through the activities below, we hope to increase involvement and participation of individuals in the county, as well as helping organisations build capacity to further help the voluntary and community sector.

We want to make it easier and clearer for individuals to access the right support at the right time, ensuring that the council has a welcoming “front door” and provides linked up services is essential to this.

As it is inherently difficult to use data to determine how strong and engaged our communities are, we need to rely on our relationships with the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) to feed back to us on how we are supporting them. As a result, our engagement activity is not only important to reach out to our communities, but also to give us an opportunity to listen and inform future decision-making based on these conversations.

Key activity:

- 1.** We will develop a communities strategy which outlines how we will better use our existing NCC assets such as Libraries and Adult learning to deliver a joined-up, wraparound service. The strategy will also set out how we will enable the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to support Norfolk’s communities.
- 2.** We will continue to provide a hardship support offer to individuals in Norfolk, the scale of which will be determined by the recent Government decision to extend the Household Support Fund by a further 6 months and the NCC funding available.



3. We will work with partners to continue the delivery of library hubs in Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth which will combine a number of services in one place. Construction will begin in Spring 2024.
4. We will develop our new Library Strategy over the next year, ready for implementation in 2025/26. Work on the Strategy will consider how we ensure library community spaces can best meet the needs of Norfolk's residents. This includes the crucial interaction of our libraries in delivering public health services, as well as making sure they are places with easy access to borrow resources, learn and discover online, and meet friends and make new ones in our spaces.
5. Following engagement with Voluntary Norfolk and internal scoping work concluding, we will deliver a volunteering strategy which will form Norfolk County Council's contribution to help address the decline of volunteering, while ensuring that volunteers receive the personal development and recognition which they deserve.
6. We will oversee and allocate the granting of infrastructure funding to the VCSE sector based on the county's priorities.
7. We will refresh our museums strategy, ensuring that key aims around sustainability and health and wellbeing are included to reflect changing visitor needs across our ten museums. We will also seek to conclude work and open Norwich Castle Keep: Reborn, which is a £15m+ project to bring a Norman castle keep to life.
8. We will continue to deliver a Fire and Rescue Service for all of Norfolk from 42 fire stations. We will work to increase the diversity of the service by improving facilities and culture, and are actively seeking to recruit more female firefighters.
9. We will continue to promote digital inclusion, entering the final year of our refreshed digital inclusion strategy. The key aims are around upskilling residents' digital skills and providing equipment to help individuals get connected who may be on tight budgets.
10. Through the Norfolk Music Service we will lead the Norfolk Music Hub, creating opportunities for a diverse range of children and young people, including those with SEND and within our disadvantaged communities to play an instrument, learn to sing, and make music with others. We will work with a broad range of local, regional and national partners to deliver music provision that responds to local context and needs.



Measuring our performance

These selected performance measures demonstrate whether our activity and interventions are having the desired outcomes, but it should be noted that they will not always directly align with our key activity as set out in this plan.

To see how we are performing against these measures, this report should be read alongside the council's full list of performance measures which are [publicly available at our Cabinet meetings](#).

For the communities area, much of our work in this space is around enabling and supporting the VCSE sector, and this is inherently difficult to measure in a quantitative way due to the nature of this work, as opposed to more obvious measures we can apply to infrastructure projects or care services.

As a result, the performance measures below are limited, but our performance in this area can also be demonstrated through the overall health of the VCSE sector in Norfolk.

- Participation of Early Years Foundation stage activity in libraries (0-5 years)
- Number of museums visits





A GREENER, MORE RESILIENT FUTURE

Protecting and maintaining access to our natural assets is an essential part of our work. We are lucky to live in an area of such diverse natural beauty and want our coastlines, broads, and green spaces to be enjoyed by residents and visitors to our county, now and in the future.

Exacerbated by climate change, we also live in an area that has seen much recent flooding, periods of hot temperatures and drought, and a coastline that is rapidly eroding. Our work is to mitigate the effects of climate change and natural disaster – but also to help communities to adapt to changes and become more resilient.

Key activity

1. We expand our work to deliver our Climate Strategy, and take forward the associated tranches of actions, which are monitored and reported on.
2. We will implement our newly published Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling strategy, building active travel schemes in targeted areas to help deliver greater mode of transport choices for residents.
3. We will build on significant work already undertaken to reduce our own estate emissions, aiming to have reduced emissions by two-thirds against our 2016/2017 baseline.
4. We will complete our roll out of LED streetlighting, creating significant energy, cost, and carbon savings.
5. We will expand electric vehicle charging points prioritising rural locations and tourist hotspots, where provision is not adequate to meet demand.
6. Following the success of securing a total of £35.7m in funding to deliver fully-electric buses, we will put these buses into operation and look for opportunities to expand the rollout, with funding for further buses where it is pragmatic to do so. We will continue to drive improvement to our bus services through the £49.5m secured in Government funding.



7. We will lead as a strategic convenor on flooding, bringing together various partners and organisations to mobilise action to prevent and respond to flooding events in the county. We will hold a multi-agency summit in Spring 2024 and work closely with local decision-makers and central government to reduce legislative barriers and improve outcomes.
8. We will continue to deliver waste reduction services and provide recycling centres for Norfolk’s residents, seeking to provide a service which meets residents’ needs while making efficiencies, such as to our opening hours in line with other authority areas.
9. We will make further strides towards nature recovery and biodiversity net-gain and will publish strategies on how we plan to achieve this. We will continue work to deliver 1 million trees in association with partners in the county.
10. We will protect and promote our natural environment and assets, through maintaining Norfolk’s trails and preserving some of the last dark skies locations in the country.



Measuring our performance

These selected performance measures demonstrate whether our activity and interventions are having the desired outcomes, but it should be noted that they will not always directly align with our key activity as set out in this plan.

To see how we are performing against these measures, this plan should be read alongside the council's full list of performance measures which are [publicly available at our Cabinet meetings](#).

- Increased use of public transport
- Total number of trips made on shared bikes/e-bikes/e-scooters in Norfolk
- EV charging infrastructure for public use, per 100,000 of population
- Streetlight stock converted to LED
- % of waste diverted from disposal at recycling centres



▶ IMPROVING THE WAY WE WORK

This section is not a distinct priority in Better Together, for Norfolk, but instead captures the cross-departmental activity which is taking place in the council that aims to make the ways we work more efficient and improve the experience for Norfolk residents.

Some of the key activity mentioned below highlights the opportunities available for us to deliver on higher demand for services within shrinking budgets, and ensuring that our service offering to residents is clear and easy to access.

Key themes

1. We will continue to work towards our commitment to net zero on all our estates by 2030, through better cross-departmental collaboration, more efficient business processes and technological advances.
2. We will work to continue to simplify our structures and reporting, and eliminate wasteful processes through a combination of transformation, standardisation, better use of digital technology, and promoting a culture of continuous improvement and efficiency.
3. We will deliver the final year of our Digital Strategy, focussing on key improvements such as public access to WiFi, cyber security and exploring the potential of AI and automation of some council processes.
4. We will foster innovation in the county, including the enhancement of a [Connected Innovation](#) network to enable businesses to access innovation funding and expertise. We expect this to help build on our strengths in the agri-bio tech sector.
5. We will regularly monitor and review the implementation of both our Workforce and Wellbeing Strategies to ensure they continue to be effective and support the organisation to deliver high quality services to the residents of Norfolk.



6. We will continue to review our property assets, consolidating and monetising in places where this is the right thing to do. Where appropriate we will release surplus property.
7. We will continue to focus resource and attention on the most corporately significant projects, ensuring the needs of residents are met and costs managed as effectively as possible.
8. We will review our constitution and scrutiny structure, ensuring it promotes clarity, efficiency and accountability within council workings for Norfolk's residents.
9. We will drive improvements to our customer experience programme, ensuring that an organisation of this scale and size provides a warm welcome and joined-up services for Norfolk residents of all demographics.
10. In line with new Government guidance, we will publish our Productivity Plan, outlining the work we have done to transform the way we operate, our use of new technology to improve our understanding of residents needs and how to best meet them, and our processes of continuous improvement to deliver value for money for our residents.



Measuring our performance

These selected performance measures demonstrate whether our activity and interventions are having the desired outcomes, but it should be noted that they will not always directly align with our key activity as set out in this plan.

To see how we are performing against these measures, this plan should be read alongside the council's full list of performance measures which are [publicly available at our Cabinet meetings](#).

- Savings targets delivered
- % lost time from sickness absences
- New employee retention (24+ months)
- Employee engagement – improving our employer contribution score
- Customer satisfaction with service received from customer service centre





▶ ANNUAL REVIEW

2023-2024

A look at key activities across Norfolk over the past year.



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▶ **LEADER'S FOREWORD**

Perhaps it is cliché to start with remarks on how busy the past year has been, and how quickly it has gone, but in this organisation it has been the truth: Since I took on leadership of the council in May, we have experienced significant changes – some of which were internally driven, and others brought about by external factors.

We now have a Chief Executive Officer, Tom McCabe, who is providing the stability, leadership, and continuity required to head an organisation of over 7,000 people. Tom joined Norfolk County Council in 2013 as Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services, becoming Head of Paid Service in 2018 before being appointed as Chief Executive in June 2023. He has a comprehensive understanding of both this organisation, as well as the pressures felt by the local government sector more widely having also worked in other local authorities.



This report summarises our progress against our stated priorities in last year's Council Delivery Plan 2023-24. Over the past 4 years, we have focused our efforts on delivering against the strategic priorities outlined in our strategy, [Better Together, For Norfolk 2021-2025](#). With one year of this strategy remaining, I want to pull out some of the highlights of delivery from over the past year.

2023 saw us reach further progress on Norfolk's devolution, which will bring additional powers and funding to the County, to drive growth and development, and improve infrastructure, housing and skills. I have previously been honest about how, before I was leader of the Council, I was cynical about what this might mean for Norfolk on the ground. Having had extended discussions with Government, though, I have seen for myself that the current deal is right for Norfolk – not least in the context of the significant benefits future “deeper” devolution could afford us, as we are seeing elsewhere.

It is with that confidence that I brought the deal to full council to be voted on in December 2023, where a majority of Councillors endorsed it and agreed that an election for a directly elected leader should move to May 2025, to align with the County Council elections.

We said we would take action on climate change, and following its publication in March 2023, our Climate Strategy has received national acclaim. With a clear direction set for what we want to achieve, and we have made significant strides against our net zero targets whether that's saving energy by converting street-lighting to LED, delivering electric buses or creating more charge points across Norfolk.

We have continued to make progress with digital connectivity, reaching some key milestones in 2024. Covid showed us how important broadband and mobile connectivity are for people to access services and learning, and for businesses to grow. Our innovative and quite unique Digital Inclusion strategy has helped bring all these agendas together and delivered better outcomes for many of our residents.

In Adult Social Care, we launched innovative solutions to identify how we might help people earlier, and so reduce and delay the need for further services. Using assistive technology, we have also helped many more people remain independent in their own homes. And for those for whom this was not possible, we have continued to deliver more targeted housing solutions through specialist programmes – with more to come.



Our Children's Services have gone from strength to strength, achieving Earned Autonomy status, in recognition of transformational work and continued focus on early help and whole family working. This means that Norfolk will be able to receive all relevant funding upfront, rather than a proportion of the funding as payment by results for family outcomes. NCC is now one of only two authorities in the Eastern region to achieve this.

Our Adult Learning service was inspected by Ofsted and rated as "good" in their report published in December 2023. The service was also named as the winner of the Further or Higher Education Provider of the Year award at this year's Norfolk Education Awards, for providing community-based and online learning for around 6,000 adults a year. It is important to note that we are making these achievements while setting a balanced budget in the face of mounting financial pressures, which continue to be considerable.

In this last year too, we have seen a continued big increase in demand for our services, particularly with adults and children's services, which are critical services most of us don't think about until we need them, and which are not always as visible as others such as roads, libraries, and museums. These however are the services that support those most vulnerable in our communities such as older people, people with learning or physical disabilities, or those who suffer from poor mental health, domestic abuse survivors, children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and adults or children at risk of harm.

We continue to look at how we deliver services, finding new and innovative ways to deal with increasing demand and strained budgets, but this only goes so far. You will have seen recently in the national media that the financial pressure facing local authorities, particularly county areas with responsibilities for care, has reached a critical point. Recognising this, we have made a concerted effort to influence decision-makers on areas which we cannot immediately control ourselves. 2023 saw us kick off a highly successful renewed engagement process with our MPs, which sees regular meetings held to discuss the most pressing issues facing the county, with a clear focus on actions to improve outcomes.

A recent success from these meetings was the retention of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Funding for our fire service when it otherwise would have been assigned elsewhere. This would have meant our nearest specialist unit equipped to deal with urban fires and disasters would have been located over two and a half hours away from the county. We will continue to expand this programme of events, reaching a wider variety of stakeholders locally, and in Westminster.



Even with the current uncertainty around local government, I know that we can together rise to this challenge as we have with challenges before. So as we take stock on all that has happened over the past year, I know it has placed us on a good footing to deliver even more progress in the year to come.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Mason-Billig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kay Mason-Billig



▶ OUR DELIVERY OVER THE PAST YEAR, IN NUMBERS

Over the past year we have:

Provided

- **19** Recycling centres.
- **15** reuse shops with over **1 million visits** in total per year.



We have processed

- **60,000 tonnes** of recycling, with
- **71.8%** diverted from landfill.
- **91.6%** of the remaining waste was sent to create energy.



Dedicated **£22.5 million** capital funding to decarbonise our buildings and reduced our estate emissions by a further **15%**, halving our estate emissions compared to the 2016/2017 baseline.

Served over **1.8 million visitors** through our **47** libraries.



Cut bus transport emissions by **80,000** tonnes of CO₂ through **70 new fully electric buses**.

Saved **3,684,368 kWh** of energy through updating our streetlighting to LEDs.

Secured funding to install over **150** new charging sockets for Electric Vehicles (EVs).



- Delivered ultra-fast broadband to over **6,900** premises and secured **£114m+** of inward investment to connect a further **62000+** properties.
- Superfast broadband now covers **97.3%** of properties in the county.



We secured **£49.5m** in Government funding in 2022 to improve bus services across the county, and since then, we have achieved:



- ▲ **31** new and enhanced bus services across Norfolk covering **1/3** of Norfolk's population
- ▲ **49** parishes now have an increased Saturday bus service
- ▲ An **18%** increase in overall passenger figures from September 2022 to 2023

Over 30,000 visits to the registrar office – which offers single point of contact & referrals to our other services

Spent £1.5 million per day on care services for adults, where we have:



<p>Received 137,000 requests for support with care.</p>	<p>Reduced our backlog of people awaiting full care following hospital by 93%</p>	<p>Supported 11,000 people home from hospital.</p>
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We continue to deliver Children's Services which are rated

 **“Good”** by Ofsted with **“exceptional areas of practice”**.


We are sharing our improvement journey with other local authorities as part of a sector-led improvement programme.


 **Norfolk County Council**

We are the lead local authority for the Eastern region's new fostering pathfinder.



We have been highlighted as providing a **“high level of support”** to a significant number of vulnerable separated migrant children, with a nationally recognised support model.



 We are a Government pathfinder for the Wraparound Childcare Scheme, moving toward the ambition that all primary aged children can access **8am-6pm childcare during term time**.





INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF OUR ANNUAL REVIEW

This Annual Review reports back on the previous year's [Corporate Delivery Plan 2023-2024](#) to highlight key areas of progress across the council in the intervening time.

Rather than trying to capture every aspect of council delivery, the review demonstrates the breadth of services we deliver, and provides some highlights on how we are delivering the priorities outlined in our strategy, [Better Together, for Norfolk 2021-2025](#).

These priorities are set out below, in the form of a statement of last year's activity, followed by its corresponding update.



▶ A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

The key objectives of this priority, outlined in our overall strategy are:

1. Supporting skills and high-value jobs.
2. Promoting growth and investment.
3. Improving infrastructure and digital connectivity.

What we said

1. Continue to deliver the 5-year Norfolk Investment Framework (NIF), with development of longer-term strategic projects underway. The Framework will deliver £1.5m worth of pilot projects due to start in April 2023.

What we did

Norfolk County Council has delivered funding to twelve pilot projects encompassing a wide range of partners and sectors. These include investigating the possibility of seaweed farming in East Anglia, improving local workforce skills, and a range of decarbonisation initiatives such as the creation of a clean hydrogen strategy and rolling out EV charge-points to rural areas. The NIF is underpinned by a comprehensive evidence base, which highlights a number of challenges facing the county, including digital connectivity, innovation, the skills gap. Our funding has targeted intervention in these areas. More information on the NIF and its [pilot projects can be found here](#).



What we said

2. Work with local partners to continue to deliver the 2021-4 Rural Economic Strategy for Norfolk, tackling issues that affect the rural community, such as skills, connectivity, access to services and infrastructure. This year, pilot projects will focus on addressing skills gaps and facilitating carbon reduction.

What we did

The activity of the Norfolk Rural Economic Strategy steering group has focused on rural needs identified within the Local Skills Improvement Plan. These are principally related to upskilling residents, improving digital connectivity and access to services. Aligned with the Norfolk Investment Framework, pilot projects include the Rural EV charging pilot and Tech Skills for Life, which aim to fulfil these needs in rural areas. Additionally, the Fixed Access Wireless Programme will bring high speed broadband to 13 village hall sites, helping better connect communities. The Rural Economic Strategy has entered its final year as a working document, with opportunities emerging to bring the rural agenda into a wider Norfolk Economic Strategy. As above, [progress on specific projects can be found using this link](#).





What we said

3. Continue to deliver our economic plan for recovery and growth, including the delivery of the Go Digital project and Innovation Grant Mentoring Programme to help create a strong, diverse and thriving economy. Key programmes will include the business start-up day and working closely with the refugee support programme.

What we did

Go Digital supports businesses with improving digital skills and has now provided support to over 1,000 Norfolk businesses since its inception. Feedback from the programme has been excellent, with 98% happy with the engagement and application process, 97% happy with the quality of support, and 95% feeling that the programme had increased their understanding of digital ways of working. The project continues to be in high demand and funding has been allocated to continue its operation. The Innovation Grant Mentoring Programme has provided fully-funded bespoke mentoring and bid coaching for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) who are seeking to attract Innovate UK grants. The collaborative efforts of the programme has helped address the issue where less than 0.4% of Innovate UK funds came to Norfolk and Suffolk, with 36 bids submitted to Innovate UK with a combined value of £4.8 million more recently. Support has also been provided to Start Up companies in Norfolk, where Business Intellectual Property Centres within libraries have been grant funded £226,000 to deliver a 2-year free service to aspiring entrepreneurs, reaching over 718 individuals.





What we said

4. Oversee the completion of construction for the Operations and Maintenance campus for Great Yarmouth which will provide a major boost to the region's offshore energy sector and local economy.

What we did

This £24.8 million partnership project is a collaboration with Great Yarmouth Borough Council and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and aims to provide the facilities required by future investors. The construction project will see 190m of river quay refurbished, including optimisation of the land for future development. Having secured £10.4m in grant funding, the full buildout of the project will create 288,700 sq ft of lettable space, with the majority constituting office space and the remainder used for storage. It is anticipated that the campus will accommodate 650 new jobs in the offshore wind sector with recruitment expected to begin in 2026. Phase 1 of construction began in early 2023 and will complete in November 2024.



What we said

5. Work with our delivery partners to continue to run the CHANCES programme and support over 2000 longer term unemployed residents into work by September 2023.

What we did

The CHANCES programme has continued to deliver support to unemployed residents with our delivery partners through to the end of September 2023. A reprofile of the project took place in early 2023 to take into account labour market effects such as lower unemployment rates and DWP centralised provisions such as Restart. As a result, the CHANCES budget and its targets were reduced by 20%. CHANCES has successfully supported 1,699 residents (against a revised target of 1,686) in their goal of moving into or towards employment. 363 unemployed participants were supported into work (against a target of 269) and 367 inactive residents were supported into work or job search (against a target of 209). This represents 43.3% of the total cohort. This exceeds the original target which was to have a positive outcome for 22.7% of participants. Additionally 243 participants moved into training or education during the lifetime of the project. Finally, a programme has been commissioned with the aim of supporting a further 1,100 residents with health conditions into work, or for those struggling at work to retain their employment. This programme runs from October 2023 to March 2025.





What we said

6. Explore opportunities to build on the success of the County Council's Employer Training Incentive Project which supported 344 Norfolk businesses in 6 months.

What we did

NCC has been successful in securing UKSPF funding from some District Councils in Norfolk offering a similar delegated grant programme to partially support the cost of training. This will enable us to pilot activity on a district basis for the financial year 2024/25 whilst continuing to explore alternative options to fund this type of activity going forward.



What we said

7. Continue to deliver the Skills, Progression, Adaptability and Resilience (SPAR) programme which incentivises local businesses to access training in key skills including digital, leadership, customer services, and relationship management.

What we did

Led by Suffolk County Council with Norfolk County Council as a geographic delivery partner, the SPAR project (launched in 2019) concluded in October 2023. The project was funded through £1.2m European Social Investment Funding (ESIF). The project was targeted to support 153 SME's across Norfolk & Suffolk, achieving 101 results. Norfolk SME businesses receiving project support totalled 79 of the 101 SMEs which received report. The project was also targeted to support 860 participants through its duration, achieving 1388 results. The project is currently under external evaluation and the county council will await these findings.





What we said

8. Work in partnership with Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Councils to deliver the new Library and Learning Hubs in Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn in early Spring 2024, which will support the development of vital skills and services in the heart of the town. We will develop plans with partners to ensure the building has maximum participation following its opening.

What we did

The council's ambitious community hubs are dynamic spaces which unite libraries, adult learning, and other services under one roof in a single location.

- In King's Lynn, significant work has taken place this year to:
 - Purchase a suitable building in the heart of the town.
 - Secure £7.4m Government Funding through the King's Lynn Town Deal.
 - Contribute £5m in funding from Norfolk County Council.
 - Lead two rounds of community engagement to gather feedback on initial designs.
 - Move into the second stage of design, focusing on sustainability, materials, and the façade appearance.
- In Great Yarmouth, significant work has taken place this year to:
 - Finalise floor plans and designs with input from Libraries staff.
 - Develop a shared brand and choose a new name for the building.
 - Work with the Borough Council and East Coast College to develop a shared curriculum offer to meet the needs of Great Yarmouth residents.
- The Great Yarmouth site is on track to open in Autumn 2024. The inception phase for the King's Lynn hub occurred as planned in Spring 2024, with a view to open it from Autumn 2025.





What we said

9. Continue to implement the priorities in the annual Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan (NSIDP), including the Transforming Cities programme, and deliver on key schemes such as the West Winch Housing Access Road, the Long Stratton Bypass, and the Norwich Western Link.

What we did

It has been a positive year for our major infrastructure projects, with the Outline Business Case for the West Winch Housing Access Road submitted to government in September 2023, approval of the Outline Business Case by government for the Norwich Western Link, and planning approval for Long Stratton Bypass secured, which should allow main construction to commence from April 2024. Construction on the Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing (Herring Bridge) was completed and the bridge opened on 1 February 2024. It links the A47 at Harfrey's roundabout to the port and enterprise zone via South Denes Road on the other side of the River Yare. The NSIDP was reviewed from May 2023 with County and District Council officers working to update progress and consider any new schemes. Three new projects have been added: Hethel Infrastructure, North Walsham Western Link Road (Industrial Estate Access), and Hunstanton Coastal Defences. Following a successful bid for Government funding, the NSIDP is moving to a digital platform in Spring 2024.





What we said

10. Continue to deliver a comprehensive capital programme to maintain and improve our 6,200 miles of road, 2,800 miles of footway and cycleway, and 3,400 miles of Norfolk Trails and public footpaths.

What we did

We have delivered a programme of highway maintenance works totalling £56m, including road resurfacing and surfacing dressing, repairs to footways, improving drainage infrastructure, as well as patching and pothole repairs. We also continue to run a preventative programme, targeting potholes before they become more established and efficiently treating them when they occur. In the 2023 National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey which collects the public views on different aspects of Highways and Transport in local authority areas, Norfolk County Council achieved a ranking of 1st out of 30 County Councils that participated. Norfolk also ranked first place overall when compared to the Eastern Region County Councils.



What we said

11. We will continue to advance opportunities to deliver and promote the economic growth potential of the A11 corridor, with a focus on advanced manufacturing, engineering agri-tech and other key sectors, and make the corridor a recognised location for investment activity.

What we did

Norfolk County Council has funded a pilot project to develop a detailed clean hydrogen strategy for the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor (CNTC) area. The strategy will drive forward the delivery of a clean hydrogen economy in the CNTC area and will therefore support Norfolk's wider progress towards net-zero. The project partners include South Norfolk and Broadland District Council, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and Breckland District Council. Norfolk and the New Anglia LEP have worked in partnership to secure a share of £7.5 million of Government innovation launchpad funding, recognising the area's strengths in the agri-bio tech sectors. The launchpad will make grant funding available to innovative projects which focus on increasing productivity and improving food manufacturing and processing.





What we said

12. Complete delivery of Better Broadband for Norfolk, which aims to deliver Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) to 8821 locations by 2024.

What we did

The current delivery target now stands at 8,221, revised from the previous target of 8,821. The reduction is largely due to premises already being upgraded to Gigabit capable broadband via separate commercial programmes. Furthermore, the focus of the programme has been on connecting the most remote and hard-to-reach properties, where collapsed or damaged pipes and inflation-driven cost increases have impacted on our ability to deliver against the targeted number of premises within the property price limit.

Notwithstanding, to date we have delivered FTTP to around 6,900 premises. We are now delivering broadband to the hardest-to-reach premises which have complex builds and pose additional costs. This has also caused a delay to the programme of up to two quarters with project completion now expected mid-2024. £113K of additional funding from Government has already been agreed to complete these premises, and an additional £344K is being sought from other Government funding streams.



What we said

13. Help roll out Project Gigabit, delivering gigabit-capable infrastructure to up 86,000 of the most hard-to-reach rural premises by 2025/6.

What we did

The Project Gigabit contract was awarded in June 2023, with 62,000 premises in scope. This is a reduction from the 86,000 properties contained in the procurement, unfortunately mostly affecting the West and Northwest of the county. However, works are now under way to seek additional funding to include a significant number of additional premises, particularly in the West and Northwest of Norfolk. The delivery project is split into 6 phases, with the planning of phase 1 expected to be completed by mid-January 2024, and delivery commencing soon after. Planning of phase 2 will then commence.





What we said

14. Continue to deliver the Norfolk and Suffolk Innovation Network, focussing on increasing the use of sensor technology across the region to help our places run as efficiently as possible.

What we did

We have delivered 108 Low Power Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN) Gateways across the county in 2023-2024, making our network the largest in the UK. In plain English, this is effectively connecting our sensor technology with itself and allows it to be centrally reported. This means we can use sensor technology to make systems smarter. We are now progressing the following activities:

- We are engaging with schools and residents on air quality and working in partnership with the University of East Anglia. This includes delivering a network of connected air quality sensors across the region.
- We have engaged with Easton College on Smart Farm proof of concept, and have installed a variety of sensors to this effect.
- We have further developed sensors for use in building management.
- We are using sensors to support the delivery of Norfolk Hackathons, a coding-based competition, using the LoRaWAN network and sensors as a core topic.



▶ **BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The key objectives of this priority are:

1. Levelling up outcomes for families.
2. Raising educational attainment for children and young people.
3. Creating better employment opportunities for young people

What we said

1. Continue to deliver the Healthy Child Programme, including statutory checks for pregnant women and young children, additional support for key groups, and health and wellbeing pathways for 5-19 year olds.

What we did

In 2023/24 we completed a strategic review of the Healthy Child Programme, from which future commissioning intentions have been developed. Mandated checks have returned to face-to-face delivery and improvements have been made for the numbers of checks completed at Antenatal, Newborn and 6-8 weeks stages. The programme has ensured key groups were prioritised for engagement and interventions including young parents, looked after children, and families from diverse backgrounds.



What we said

2. Work with the Department for Education to maximise the impact of our status as an Education Investment Area, targeting investment, support and action to help children from all backgrounds to succeed at the highest levels.

What we did

Our focus in 23/24 has been on engaging with the [Government's Priority Education Investment Area \(PEIA\)](#) in Norwich. NCC has contributed to the design of – and promoted engagement with – the current PEIA offer for schools. This transition was managed by NCC on behalf of the Department for Education to jointly scope and deliver pilot projects for the PEIA in primary school writing and secondary school attendance. These pilot projects have formed the basis for the current projects now being delivered by Inspiration and Sapientia trusts. School participation in the projects is high. NCC remain represented on both the Primary and Secondary Headteachers Boards and the overall PEIA Partnership Board. As part of an extended offer to schools, NCC contributes to selection panels and the delivery of an enhanced offer to target schools through the TDT (Teacher Development Trust). This participation has secured expertise within NCC to replicate the model with other schools, and we are now considering how this work can benefit the wider Education Investment Area.





What we said

3. Take a system-wide local first inclusion approach to help intervene early and more holistically to prevent escalation of need, focusing on how we incentivise and increase mainstream inclusion practice.

What we did

The six-year Local First Inclusion programme started formally in April 2023 following Secretary of State approval of investment. The Local First Inclusion programme is being delivered through 5 Workstreams and over 80 individual projects. These projects span the full range of support for Special Educational Needs & Disabilities, and Alternative Provision, with the primary focus on local mainstream inclusion through 'SEN Support', alongside building more specialist resource bases (hosted by mainstream schools) and expanding state funded special schools. This includes, from September 2023, successfully establishing new school and community teams in 15 zones across Norfolk to enhance the prevention and early help offer supporting schools and families where their children have emerging special educational needs (SEN). The new service is already working with 320 schools in Norfolk and 600 children and young people.



What we said

4. Progress our ambitious goal of enabling more local children to have their special educational needs met in Norfolk by establishing plans for the two further new special schools identified in the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.

What we did

In July 2023, the Department for Education confirmed that Norfolk had been successful with our bids for capital funding. This means that we will be able to establish a new 170-place Complex Needs School in the Great Yarmouth area and a new 100-place Autistic Spectrum Disorder school in the Downham Market area. The Department is currently overseeing the formal process to identify and appoint Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) sponsors to operate the schools. We are actively involved in this process with a decision expected in April 2024.





What we said

5. Work to sustain the improvements of “Good” in all areas following our recent Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) and work towards “Outstanding”.

What we did

The outcome the inspection at the end of 2022 was extremely positive. As part of any inspection process, it will highlight some areas for further development, and we maintain our commitment to continuous development. The three areas for development identified by Ofsted, along with our responses, are:

- The practice response to children aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless. The measures taken to improve this area of practice include developing a data dashboard, a practice guide, a joint housing protocol, training for practitioners, and focused quality assurance.
- The recognition of and response to children who are experiencing neglect over a prolonged period of time. This area of practice is already a priority for the Norfolk Safeguarding Children’s Partnership. Our further response includes the establishment of a neglect practice group and champions, the development of further practice guidance and training on the Graded Care Profile tool, and the creation of an operational oversight forum. The results of an audit have showed improvement in the identification and planning for children experiencing neglect.
- Decision-making, practice and support to children placed within their family and friends networks, which also ensures that carers are well supported and regulatory requirements are consistently met. This is an important area of practice, which has been recognised by the National Review of Children’s Social Care. We have reviewed the existing and current set of family arrangements and issued new practice guidance to establish regular senior oversight and create independent monitoring arrangements for assurance.

These areas will continue to be an important focus for the Council, expanding the focus on the voice of the child, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency practice, early help and prevention, and implementing new ways of working in response to the National Social Care Review.





What we said

6. Continue to adopt a proactive approach in planning for areas with demographic change, to ensure sufficient school places for children in Norfolk as well as efficient use of resources and value for money.

What we did

The School Sufficiency Plan was approved by Cabinet in January 2024. Through the annual Published Admission Number consultation, we have engaged with schools' governing boards and Multi-Academy Trusts to propose revised numbers which consider reduced catchment numbers for some schools. There has been increasing engagement from these stakeholders and we will continue the dialogue with them into the coming year, some areas of the county are experiencing a considerable decline in primary school age children, and this is expected to continue.





What we said

7. In light of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, improve the experience of families seeking help, including exploring the 'Family Help' model that will allow professionals, including social workers, to operate more flexibly to meet the needs of children and families, and Joint Agency Group Supervision to share information to promote wellbeing and protect children.

What we did

The Independent Review of Social Care has challenged a number of traditional models of support offered to vulnerable families. Ahead of any national decision, we have been piloting a Family Help approach in two of our six localities, which allows us to assess the effectiveness of the model for families and also for our staff. The pilot has been operational since June 2023 and has been testing the impact of larger multi-disciplinary teams and changes to the manager role. The model has shown a reduction in the number of hand-offs between professionals (which we know families do not like), has encouraged professionals to work more collaboratively, and has enabled us to use the specialist skills of our managers to deliver better outcomes.

Our Family Help model pilot has aimed to address the features in the national response to the Review, called the Stable Home, Built on Love strategy, and we need to ensure that we are well placed to respond within the context of our rural geography. We have put in place an evaluation around our pilot, and have also submitted an application to the DfE to be a Pathfinder LA in their Families First for Children Programme which is seeking to test Family Help alongside several other priorities.





What we said

8. Establish a children and young people's system collaborative with an initial focus on multi-disciplinary community-based delivery models for children and young people with mental health needs.

What we did

The Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance System collaborative has been successfully created by chief officers across Norfolk and presents an extremely powerful opportunity to realise our ambition that all children flourish in Norfolk. The principles of the collaborative have been agreed, focusing on early intervention and prevention, 'place', looking holistically at needs, and moving away from a clinical model to one rooted in community-led early help. Recent developments have included greater integration of front door services, development of joint practice models, mental health support teams in schools and the introduction of School and Community zones. Going forward there will be two key focus areas, building a collaborative approach to supporting neurodiversity and strengthening our approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing.



What we said

9. Prepare for the new SEND Inspection Framework by undertaking a self-inspection and developing a comprehensive improvement plan, working in partnership to collectively drive better outcomes for children with SEND, and improving communications so that families better understand where to find support.

What we did

A partnership group comprising NCC Children's & Adults Services and the Integrated Care Board has met regularly since April 2023 to develop the Area SEND & Alternative Provision Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF). The Norfolk SEF has been informed by guidance from the national Department for Education SEND Adviser and NHS England leads for East of England, and also by analysis of areas who have undergone inspection within the new Framework. A first draft SEF has been prepared and agreed, and this will now be fully developed to create a version that is agreed by the partnership (including sense checking with Family Voice Norfolk as the Parent Carer Form). This will then be subject to regular review to ensure that it is in a permanent state of readiness ahead of inspection by Ofsted or the Care Quality Commission.





What we said

10. Work with partners in the education system to create a new Learning Ambition for Norfolk which will form the basis of a sustained programme of work over the coming 3-5 years to support significant improvement in learning outcomes for children and young people.

What we did

The outline of the Learning Ambition has been agreed. Sector engagement sessions were held at the start of the autumn term to agree and define five key themes: Capacity and Expertise of the Education Workforce, Ensuring Effective Transitions, Improving Data and Information Sharing, Enhancing the self-improving Standard through a Norfolk Collaborative Standard, and Supporting Resilient Families and Communities. These themes have been endorsed by the Norfolk Learning Board. The focus will now be on the recruitment of members from the system to the Priority Task Groups and identify key deliverables. The programme of activity was established in January 2024.





What we said

11. Improve the sufficiency of placements for children in care by increasing recruitment and retention of foster carers and specialist children's residential practitioners and developing better quality, local and more affordable provision.

What we did

Placement sufficiency to ensure the right provision for our children in care has been and continues to be a challenge, national and locally. Over the past few years and exacerbated by the pandemic, we have also seen the needs of children and young people increase and become more complex. In response, our strategy has evolved and has recently been updated to:

- Invest in further innovative interventions at the edge of care to reduce the number of children and young people needing to be looked after.
- Achieve a step-change in in-house fostering capacity through a whole-Council and whole County focus on carer recruitment and retention. We have already seen an improvement here, with numbers of carers likely to be maintained in 23-4 (equal numbers entering and leaving the system) after several years of significant reductions.
- Significantly re-shape in-house provision to achieve to support the changing needs of children and young people.
- Create more specialist provision for children with learning disability, autism and physical disabilities.
- In addition, Norfolk was successful in the bid to the DfE to deliver a regional Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme, and has been appointed as the regional lead to work across 10 Local Authorities. We will “host” the new Regional Fostering Hub for the Eastern Region.





What we said

12. Deliver our revised Apprenticeship Strategy over 2023/2024, which will set out an updated action plan for apprenticeships in Norfolk across all areas of the council, reducing siloed working and ensuring better collaboration between departments. Particular focus will be placed on apprenticeships which help deliver on Net-Zero priorities.

What we did

We have developed the revised NCC Apprenticeship Strategy and Operational Delivery Plan for 2023-2025, which encompasses strategic aims to support apprenticeships in Norfolk across the council (Children's Services, Growth & Investment and Human Resources). The Strategy and Operational Delivery Plan have been approved by the NCC Apprenticeships Board, and was endorsed by Cabinet in December 2023. As at January 2024, we have employed 516 apprentices across NCC, Fire & Rescue, and schools, marking a total of 1272 since the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in 2017. We continue to focus on the aims of our strategy, including a focus on green apprenticeships to help deliver on Net Zero priorities.



▶ HEALTHY, FULFILLING AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

The key objectives of this priority are:

1. Levelling up health.
2. Living well.
3. Delivering better local services.

What we said

1. Build on work already completed in 2022 to offer preventative support to help people live independently for as long as possible, using digital technology to identify people who might benefit from earlier help.

What we did

Connecting Communities has been a major programme of transformation over the past 18 months in Adult Social Services. We set out to offer more effective short-term services to everyone we support and make every initial engagement count, helping people to stay independent for longer, and are on track to achieve our targets. We have increased our re-ablement support through Norfolk First Response, helping more people remain independent in their own homes.

Our new ways of working have promoted collaborative, strengths-based practice. We have introduced an innovative new digital platform which analyses millions of factors to identify people most likely to benefit from early help and prevention. Individuals with vulnerability risks are proactively contacted and offered a range of interventions to alleviate or reduce these risks. A pilot to prevent falls (a major cause of hospitalization for older people) was launched in May 2023, and has led to 700 people being referred to services and activities targeted at their needs.



**What we said**

2. Continue to engage and work with the Norfolk Strategic Housing Partnership to achieve our goal of No Homelessness in Norfolk and continue to deliver the Norfolk Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

What we did

The provision of affordable housing continues to be a key area of focus for all partners, particularly through this period of high cost of living, and increasingly unaffordable private rentals. This is a thorny issue that no single authority is able to resolve in isolation, and over the next period the County Council will work with partners to explore the opportunities that arise from devolution of brownfield funding in Norfolk, to unlock housing sites which would not have been possible to exploit otherwise. Over the past year, the focus for Adult Social Care in this area has been to fully integrate our duty around Domestic Abuse as a key priority for the partnership, ensuring that the needs of victim-survivors are considered at every step. Going forward, our Domestic Abuse Commissioning Manager will be part of the action review group.

**What we said**

3. Continue to fulfil our duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to meet the needs of victim-survivors living in safe accommodation. Work is ongoing to deliver the [Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy](#), a key aim of which is to increase the amount of flexible accommodation and quality of support for victim-survivors fleeing domestic abuse in Norfolk.

What we did

We have continued to fulfil our duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to meet the needs of victim-survivors living in safe accommodation in Norfolk. We have done this by recently refreshing both the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy. We continue to focus on increasing the amount of flexible accommodation and quality of support for victim-survivors. Since April 2022 we have increased the number of bedspaces for those fleeing domestic abuse from 54 (all for women) to 101 (some of which can now be used by male and female adult as well as their children). In addition, we have been able to improve the quality of the support being provided in safe accommodation by designing and introducing a Quality Assessment Framework, with which to monitor and advise on continuous improvement.





What we said

4. Continue to deliver the Public Health Wellbeing Programme, including rolling out a new provider framework for weight management interventions from April 2023, as well as continuing to support people needing Drug & Alcohol treatment services and support to quit smoking.

What we did

In 2023/24 we:

- established our revised approach to weight management interventions, including an exercise programme, and embedded a self-referral model through our [Ready to Change website](#);
- appointed a new provider for our specialist 'stop smoking' support service, Smokefree Norfolk;
- increased drug & alcohol treatment places for criminal justice clients, countywide; increased employment opportunities for people affected by drug & alcohol misuse through the Individual Placement and Support Service; and initiated a countywide housing support service for those in drug & alcohol treatment.



What we said

5. Continue to deliver Project ADDER in association with partners, which has been extended until 2025 due to its success. The project is a key feature of the Government's 10 Year Drugs Strategy, From Harm to Hope.

What we did

Project ADDER delivery has continued and expanded, with the establishment of a countywide ADDER criminal justice team and increasing the number of treatment places by opening services to alcohol misuse clients. The County Council has continued to work in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver the national strategy locally through the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership. The governance and programme delivery structures for Serious Violence and Combatting Drugs have been fully integrated, leading to better collaboration and more efficient systems. This model has been recognised as best practice and included in Home Office Guidance.





What we said

6. Work with key agencies in the new Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership to deliver positive outcomes locally with regards to reducing drug use, drug-related deaths, crime and harm, as well as reducing drug supply and increasing engagement with treatment and recovery. Priorities will be agreed in 2023.

What we did

The Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership has agreed the following four key priorities:

- **Dual Diagnosis (DD):** Develop pathways that support engagement, treatment and recovery for people experiencing both mental health and substance misuse issues.
- **Continuity of Care (CoC):** Prison to Community Treatment: Ensure that those moving between prison and community treatment do not fall through the gaps at a particularly vulnerable time.
- **Workforce development:** Identify if staff have access to appropriate training and, if gaps are found, to develop appropriate packages of training.
- **Project ADDER expansion:** Implement best practice on enforcement, treatment and recovery, drawn from the Greater Norwich ADDER pilot (which focused on heroin and crack users in contact with the criminal justice system) – across the county, including for treatment pathways relating to alcohol and recreational drugs.

It has also made progress in expanding elements of project ADDER countywide and improving transfer rates for prison to community treatment. The County Council continues to invest a significant proportion of its Public Health grant in drugs and alcohol prevention.





What we said

7. Continue to deliver the Independent Living programme and the Supported Living Capital Housing programme, including 12 new units of bespoke accommodation for people with complex needs during 2023.

What we did

As a result of the Supported Living programme 15 homes have been developed for people with complex needs – people have been able to move from institutional environments into real homes in communities. 12 young people are living independently and learning the skills they will need to grow into successful independent lives. Planning is in progress for nearly 60 homes in 3 localities which will provide homes for people with a range of support needs and reduce the use of residential care and institutional environments.

Independent Living provides older people with high quality accommodation and on-site care and support. So far over 120 homes have been provided and people living there are vocal about the benefits of living independently as part of a community.





What we said

8. Complete the work at all existing sites agreed under the Changing Places toilets initiative, which helps increase independence and quality of life for people with complex needs and disabilities, and consider any further sites that the funding allows.

What we did

Work is underway across the five identified sites:

- Acle, Gressenhall, Wroxham and Dereham have completed the final stages of design and are about to move through the planning process. We anticipate construction will start on these sites in the summer-autumn of 2024.
- Brancaster is a collaborative project alongside the National Trust to bring the Changing Places facility to life as part of a wider National Trust-led redevelopment.
- In addition to the five pre-identified sites, we are incorporating Changing Places provision in our new Community hub sites in Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Hunstanton, meaning that by 2025 Norfolk County Council will have developed 8 new Changing Places sites across the county.



What we said

9. Build on the work completed to improve Home Care provision, including delivering our strategic plan over the next year to continue driving improvement to the market.

What we did

We have begun the implementation of the Home Care Strategy, with the first phase going live in August in the Primary Care Network areas of Great Yarmouth and Waveney, Gorleston and North Norfolk. The first phase will be completed by April 2024, when the new contracts for those Primary Care Network areas will go live. The next phase will begin in April 2024 and cover West Norfolk and the rest of North Norfolk. The implementation of this strategic approach will support the drive towards improving quality of care provision and the ambition in Norfolk for everyone to be able to access good and outstanding social care.



What we said

10. Continue to play a key leadership role in the Integrated Care System (ICS) to improve population health and care, tackle unequal outcomes, enhance value for money, and support social and economic development.

What we did

NCC has established a key leadership role in the ICS, chairing the Integrated Care Partnership, and the attending the Integrated Care Board. The ICS has embedded structures for delivering its ambitions at a community level and NCC has developed senior leadership for each ICS 'Place', including coordination of Health and Wellbeing Partnerships through a collaboration between Public Health and District Councils. We have reviewed the Better Care Fund, our ICS' largest joint commissioning arrangement, in line with new agreements at place level, whilst maintaining County-wide commitment to equality of access, consistent service models, and developing a deeper strategic relationship with health services.

What we said

11. Continue to prepare for expected social care reform, using the delay announced in the Government's Autumn Statement to rescope our project programme to improve our efficiency and outcomes for people.

What we did

Reform from Government has not been immediately forthcoming. The cap on cost of care and means testing reforms have been postponed until after the next general election. In the meantime, we are continuing to lobby Government for long-term sustainable funding to support the changes to our care costs associated with these reforms. This is a national issue and other authorities will also be in this position.



What we said

12. Adopt the new Community Risk Management Plan (23-6) and action plan within our Fire and Rescue Service and make Norfolk safer through its prevention, protection and response activities.

What we did

NFRS has adopted and is delivering against the Community Risk Management Plan (23-26) and our improvement action plan to make Norfolk safer through our prevention, protection and response activities. We have made significant progress against our Proposals, including:

- Developing a more targeted approach to prevention activity across Norfolk's communities, prioritising vulnerable people and those at highest risk.
- Aligning our specialist water capability to the locations of greatest risk.
- Amending the way we calculate and report our emergency response attendance time to align with the Home Office and HMICFRS.
- Reviewing and improving our readiness to respond to summer heatwave conditions.
- Continuing our collaboration with other emergency responders by progressing the development of local participation in the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) scheme.
- Commencing the planning phase of undertaking a detailed review of the On-Call Model in tandem with an anticipated national review.



▶ **STRONG, ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES**

The key objectives of this priority are:

1. Facilitating involvement and participation.
2. Building capacity within the voluntary and community sector.
3. Helping empower our communities.

What we said

1. Continue to work effectively with the VCSE sector and take a whole system approach to the way we support residents in the county. We will build on work already undertaken to agree commissioning approaches and develop an overall set of principles that look more broadly at the way the council communicates, engages and works with the sector.

What we did

Through the continued funding of the Empowering Communities Partnership of VCSE infrastructure organisations, we have enabled the sector to access training, advice and peer support opportunities. This year we have been working with the sector to help halt a national decline in volunteering through supporting a Norfolk Vision for Volunteering and advocating for a coordinated system-wide approach.



What we said

2. Work with the VCSE sector to develop a volunteering strategy for Norfolk, delivering a set of properties for volunteering across the County to support communities, improved mental health and wellbeing, and develop innovative opportunities for people gaining vital work experience to support aspiration.

What we did

We have worked closely with Voluntary Norfolk over the past year to identify trends contributing to the decline of volunteering. While many of these factors are national trends and therefore outside of our control, work has undertaken to develop a Volunteering Strategy for the organisation based on the key issues identified in Voluntary Norfolk's Vision for Volunteering (launched November 2023) in the county and measures which can be taken by Norfolk County Council to address volunteer decline. The Strategy will further be developed following input from key stakeholders, with a view to publish it in Autumn 2024.





What we said

3. Work with VCSE and local council partners to continue to deliver the Hardship Support Programme to provide financial support to Norfolk households where this is necessary, and develop sustainable long-term solutions for hardship in our communities.

What we did

Since the launch of the Household Support Funding programme, Norfolk County Council has been allocated over £33m to support vulnerable residents in the county. The 4th round of the funding scheme launched in April 2023. As of the time of writing, Government has extended the fund by a further 6 months.

Over the past year the fund has been allocated as follows:

- Client Hardship Services (formerly the Norfolk Assistance Scheme) - £3.3m
- Support for families who receive Free School Meals - £7.2m, this funds weekly cost of living vouchers of £15 per month, per child, with an additional payment of £30 in December to coincide with the Christmas holidays.
- Local support in the community provided by District/Borough/City Councils - £2m.
- Support targeted to voluntary and community groups - £0.8m, local organisations have been able to apply for grants to support vulnerable clients over winter in a scheme managed by the Norfolk Community Foundation.
- Support available from libraries - £0.2m, including free winter bags which will include hot water bottles, blankets and draught excluders, 'Just a Cuppa' sessions, where people can meet and chat, while enjoying a hot drink. Other service offerings are covered in the followed item (4).
- Support for six local charities who provide a range of advice including work, benefits, money and debt as well as mental health support for young people, information and advocacy - £0.3m.





What we said

4. Continue to promote Public Health campaigns through our libraries, using them as an essential part of the provision of NHS health checks for local communities, as well as offering all libraries as warm spaces throughout colder months.

What we did

We have successfully promoted Public Health Campaigns in our libraries and hosted NHS health checks throughout the County, providing access to health checks at rural accessible venues. Our libraries have acted as warm hubs during the colder months, providing free hot drinks to all, along with providing hot bottles and draught excluders to those in need. We also ran free slow cooker courses in conjunction with Adult Learning. This was alongside our Tricky Period offer and Toiletries To Go. We have supported mental health, especially in men, by continuing our Read My Mind Project and expanding this to other activities which invite men to come along meet with peers and exchange conversations.



What we said

5. Continue to meet the legal duties of the Armed Forces Act across council departments by implementing the duty of due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, and promote the Covenant internally and with partners, where possible.

What we did

We have implemented the duty of due regard throughout our organisation, such as within our Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) process and have provided a reference document for frontline employees in adult services on how they can better support and signpost residents who are veterans or part of a service family to the help they need. As lead partner for the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board, the council has supplied information to the national Forces Connect App to help increase awareness of the support available to the armed forces community through a variety of charitable and public sector bodies. The council continues to support the work of the Covenant through organising workshops, funding recruitment media outreach and supporting charities to reduce social isolation, and commissioned a needs assessment for the local armed forces community which is [publicly available here](#).





What we said

6. Continue to offer investment in infrastructural support to the VCSE sector, focussing on funding and finance, advice and support, volunteer recruitment and deployment, and training.

What we did

We remain committed to funding and developing Norfolk's VCSE Infrastructure offer. In 2021 Norfolk County Council committed additional funding to infrastructure acknowledging the additional challenges facing the sector post covid and with the cost of living crisis. The Empowering Communities Partnership brought together the key support organisations to provide high-quality coordinated and targeted support and services to strengthen the VCSE sector and enable organisations to access the help they need. The partnership is funded until September 2024 and within its first two years has:

- Provided a single front door and a joined up VCSE sector support programme
- Encouraged and enabled wider volunteer engagement
- Built VCSE capacity and capabilities
- Strengthened VCSE leadership and collective voices



What we said

7. Continue to work with partners and stakeholders to better connect the support we commission and make it simpler for residents to access the help or services they need.

What we did

NCC has funded universal access to the Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN) referral system until March 2024 to provide a single approach for referrals. We continue to look at how we better connect our own services and have delivered training to our reception areas to ensure the first welcome into our building is friendly and approachable.





What we said

8. Continue to roll out our ambitious 3-year Digital Inclusion Strategy to ensure that Norfolk residents have access to the digital skills development and connectivity they need for their lives and work, and look at innovative ways to use technology to upskill our staff and improve the ways we work with partners and communities.

What we did

The council's [Digital Inclusion Strategy](#) was refreshed in December 2021 and a partnership programme set up in January 2022 including the council, health colleagues from Norfolk and Waveney ICB, VCSE and District council colleagues. The council has surpassed its strategy's annual target within 8 months to refurbish over 1,000 devices, helping get individuals better connected who may be on tight budgets. A library laptop/tablet loaning scheme was launched last August and up until December 2023 over 500 loans have been made. The authority again surpassed its strategy target of 1000 by supporting 3295 adult learners with digital skills training through to December 2023. The council has piloted an innovative new service which provides wraparound tech support by way of four local community tech coaches – you can read more about [Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk here](#). The Digital Inclusion Strategy is aligned to the council's Corporate Strategy, Better Together, for Norfolk and also runs until 2025.



What we said

9. Deliver a fourth year of Digifest, which will aim to inspire the next generation of coders, creators and tech innovators.

What we did

Over the years, Digifest has been a great success, and has continued to attract and inspire young people. DigiFest 2023 included 112 events with 719 participants at libraries across the county. A strong majority (88-98%) of participants reported improved knowledge, skills and attitudes towards digital technology. Activities included coding with robots like Botley and Codeapillar, 3D printing, stop-motion animation and educational Minecraft. There were also basic digital skills sessions for adults which partners such as Adult Learning and ICT solutions helped to deliver.



▶ A GREENER, MORE RESILIENT FUTURE

The key objectives of this priority are:

1. Protecting and enhancing our environment.
2. Providing access to quality spaces.
3. Increasing community resilience.

What we said

1. Begin to implement our climate strategy which sets out a comprehensive approach to reducing our carbon emissions, protecting nature and adapting to change.

What we did

With its Climate Strategy in place, the council is now setting out action plans that translate its vision for a low carbon county into practical delivery. Two tranches of actions have been published so far, with the final tranche due in summer 2024. These actions will be reported on and updated each year to help inform residents on progress being made to deliver on the ambitious Climate Strategy. Key highlights to date include securing investment for 70 zero emission buses in the county (more information is included in the update for activity 3 below, as well as securing funding for around 80 electric vehicle public charge-points in rural and tourist areas and installations of charge-points in parts of Norwich with little off street parking. The County Council will publish its Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling Strategy in Spring 2024 which will help enable 50% of journeys in towns and cities to be completed on foot, scooter, or bike.



What we said

2. Continue to implement projects from our Local Transport Plan (LTP), and ensure it is aligned with carbon reduction targets expected from the Department for Transport in summer 2023.

What we did

The LTP4 Implementation Plan sets the target to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions from transport by 2050, in line with the government's Net Zero Strategy. New Local Transport Plan guidance was expected as early as 2022, which the Department for Transport were expected to publish Quantifiable Carbon Reduction (QCR) guidance along with. However, at the time of writing the QCR and LTP guidance have still not been published.

In advance of the emerging guidance on carbon quantification, Norfolk County Council has already demonstrated tangible action towards carbon reduction throughout our Climate Strategy, fourth Local Transport Plan, Environmental Policy (2019) and the wider list of transport proposals. The County Council has been successful in securing additional funding to advance de-carbonisation in the county, these funds include the following with more information on the funds covered in other activities:

- Transforming City Fund (TCF).
- Zero Emission Transport City (ZETC).
- Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)
- Bus Service Improvement Fund (BSIP).
- Active Travel Fund (ATF).





What we said

3. Aim to further reduce our own emissions, including through further rollout of LED streetlighting and the commencement of a multi-year building retrofit programme.

What we did

In alignment with our commitment to achieving a net-zero estate by 2030, we have made significant strides in upgrading our lighting infrastructure to energy-efficient LED units since 2008. In 2023 alone, we successfully converted over 8,732 streetlights, surpassing the two-thirds mark of our total streetlighting stock. This conversion resulted in a substantial in-year electricity reduction of 28%, equivalent to 3,684,368 kWh of energy and 785 tonnes of carbon. Our ongoing efforts are directed towards completing the LED conversion of the remaining streetlights by 2025, targeting a total of 15,000 units. This will contribute an additional 1,100,717 kWh in energy savings and reduce carbon emissions by 245 tonnes. Information on our energy savings from retrofit is covered in the response for activity 6 below.



What we said

4. Continue to support our residents in reducing their own emissions, including through the rollout of electric buses in the Norwich area and a programme of installing EV charging points.

What we did

The council has been successful over the past year in securing funding for zero-emission buses, with £14.7m secured from the Department for Transport and £21m from operator First Bus, bringing 70 fully electric buses to the county. Additionally, the First Bus depot at Roundtree Way will become one of the first fully electric bus depots outside of London. 7 electric buses have been delivered and are already operating in Norfolk, with the remaining 63 going on the roads before the end of March 2024. This switch will reduce CO2 emissions by more than 80,000 tonnes, which is equivalent to taking around 4,700 small petrol cars off the road. Work to install new EV chargers in Norfolk continues at pace, following successful funding bids for the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) and funding through the Norfolk Investment Framework. Combined, this will bring over 150 new charging points for use across the county.





What we said

5. Work with our partners in the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership and the Integrated Care System to take forward actions where a collaborative approach is the best way forward.

What we did

We supported a successful bid led by Great Yarmouth Borough Council for Innovation UK's Fast Followers funding to help Norfolk citizens to get the support and information they need to feel confident to take up low carbon technologies such as improving their home energy efficiency, installing a heat pump or making their next car electric. The council has been engaging with our district partners through the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership on creating an Energy Plan for Norfolk. When created, this will improve coordination between development plans across the county and energy infrastructure investment so that Norfolk's growth and energy needs in a net-zero future can be met.



What we said

6. Continue to work towards our commitment to making our estates net-zero for carbon emissions by 2030, a climate strategy and associated action plan is planned for launch in Spring 2023.

What we did

Norfolk County Council is making steady progress on decarbonising its estates with a 15% reduction in emissions over 2023 compared to the previous year. We have worked at pace to halve our current estate emissions against our 2016/2017 baseline and expect to have achieved a 66% reduction by 2024/2025. This places the authority well on track to achieve net-zero by 2030, where the authority will have reduced its carbon footprint by 90%, with certified offsets accounting for the remaining 10%.





What we said

7. Build on progress towards nature recovery by continuing to deliver the 1 Million Trees for Norfolk Programme. We will publicly engage on our new Green Infrastructure Strategy in February 2023.

What we did

A significant programme of tree-planting work involving partners including local communities, schools, and parish councils is continuing strongly, and NCC is working towards the next major milestone of 400,000 trees planted across the county by the end of the planting season in March 2024. As we have newly recruited our Head of Environment, work is taking place to consolidate our strategies and plans in this space, and as such there will be more to report on relating to biodiversity net-gain and nature recovery on our delivery plan for 2024-2025.



What we said

8. Continue to deliver waste reduction initiatives and deliver improvements to the recycling centre network, with new sites being considered in the Sheringham, Wymondham, Long Stratton and North Walsham areas.

What we did

We continue to encourage households to reduce the amount of waste they throw away through a series of initiatives which include reduced price home compost bins and advice. These include a Food Savvy communications campaign, which focuses on planning, storage and using up leftovers, as well as our Refill campaign, which aims to reduce the number of single use products used in Norfolk. Planning applications are being progressed for new recycling centres for Sheringham and Wymondham Recycling Centres and land searches are underway for new sites in the Morningthorpe and North Walsham areas.





What we said

9. Continue our work to deliver ‘Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn’, our £13.5m (now £15m) project to transform Norwich Castle’s iconic Norman Keep.

What we did

The Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn project is approaching completion, with the transformed Norwich Castle Keep expected to reopen to visitors in summer 2024. The £15m funded project which includes investment from a large number of external stakeholders is one of the largest heritage projects of its kind currently underway in the UK. The project has seen the Castle’s medieval floors and rooms rebuilt to their original state, so that everyone can experience a Norman royal palace and its stories. The new offer will provide a high quality and accessible visitor experience of national significance, including a major new British Museum partnership gallery of medieval life.



What we said

10. Continue to work to improve Norfolk’s green travel networks for the benefit of both people and the environment, through Greenways to Greenspaces, which this coming year will include identifying new sites for roadside nature reserves and the opening of five new walking routes in partnership with the Norfolk Platinum Jubilee Committee.

What we did

In the past year the Greenways to Green Spaces Team have worked to substantially improve Norfolk’s green travel networks for both people and the environment and have identified 112 new candidate sites for Roadside Nature Reserves. On 11 May 2023, five new Jubilee Trails were launched in Norfolk in partnership with the Norfolk Platinum Jubilee Committee, to commemorate Her Majesty’s Jubilee. The aim was to create trails which were within reach from all over Norfolk, where possible. The routes are The Elizabeth Way (Heacham to King’s Lynn), the West Acre Way (Gayton to West Acre), The Wendling Way (Dereham to Gressenhall), the Chet River Circular (Loddon to Chedgrave) and The Eastern Maritime Way (Great Yarmouth to Lowestoft – cycling trail).





What we said

11. Continue to deliver the Dark Skies programme to help protect the remaining dark landscapes in the UK. Working with partners, we will continue to deliver events to promote the programme and help reduce light pollution across the county.

What we did

Dark Skies was piloted in 2023 with funding support from the Interreg EXPERIENCE project. The Norfolk County Council Protected Landscapes team runs various small-scale events over the past few years under the umbrella of the Dark Skies Festival.



What we said

12. Continue, as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), to play a key role in protecting our communities from the impact of coastal and inland flooding, making additional funding of £1.5m available in each of the next two years and working with partners in the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) to help address agreed priorities.

What we did

Norfolk, as the LLFA and at the time of writing, has received 819 reports of flooding so far from April 2023. Of those 279 meet our thresholds for formal investigations, which are continuing. Storm Babet in October 2023 caused the greatest impact with 137 properties flooding internally. The majority of these properties were in and around Attleborough. Due to the exceptionally high rainfall across the Region over many months of 2023, long term groundwater issues are affecting many areas in west, north and east Norfolk.

The NSFA continues to work with its partners on priority schemes across the County. Drainage improvement and flood mitigation works have been installed in Besthorpe, Brockdish and Bighton Road, and Acle. Recent work has also focussed on the maintenance of drainage systems, rivers and watercourses, issues around coastal change, and identifying the changing nature of flood risk related to climate change and how Norfolk can be prepared for and respond to that.





What we said

13. Invest, subject to the confirmation of Active Travel England, the award of Active Travel Phase 3 funding of almost £1m to deliver 3 further Active Travel schemes over 2023/2024, namely Jellicoe Road in Great Yarmouth, Middleton Road in Gorleston, and Mile Cross Road in Norwich.

What we did

The schemes mentioned above are currently going through design reviews with Active Travel England, with a further £739,000 successfully awarded to assist in delivery of these.

In January 2023 we were invited by the Department for Transport to bid for further capital funding for cycling and walking infrastructure schemes as part of Active Travel 4, and were successful in being awarded £2.24m in March 2023 to deliver eight active travel schemes across Norfolk with the emphasis on pedestrian crossings near 4 schools in Dereham, Fleggburgh, Brundall, in 2023-24. Other crossing and cycle lane schemes in Thorpe St Andrew Kings Lynn, Hunstanton & Sandringham are being delivered in 2024/25. At the same time, we were awarded a further £100,000 to support revenue funded work.

We continue to engage with Active Travel England to seek funding to deliver our top two schemes in Gorleston and Bradwell to the value of £1.045m. We are awaiting the outcome of these discussions. We are also delivering some £3m worth of cycling and walking improvement schemes in West Norfolk as part of their Active and Clean Connectivity (A&CC) programme linked to £25m of Town Deal funding. The schemes are moving through design with several smaller schemes delivered and the remaining to be completed by March 2026. Schemes in the Greater Norwich area are being delivered as part of the Transforming Cities Programme.





OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

This section is not an explicitly mentioned priority within Better Together, for Norfolk, but features in Corporate Delivery Plan 2023-2024. This seeks to capture the cross-cutting work taking place across the organisation to improve efficiency and customer experience.

What we said



1. We will continue to advance progress towards our County Deal, working with our partners to develop strong models of delivery and collaboration. It is expected that County Councillors will have the opportunity to vote to endorse the leader and change the Council's model of governance, to have a leader directly elected by the public, later in 2023.

What we did

On 12 December 2023, Norfolk County Councillors voted to endorse the in-principle devolution agreement with Government, which would bring:

- in excess of £600m of un-ringfenced investment to Norfolk over a period of 30 years, to invest in business support, innovation, and much needed infrastructure
 - nearly £7m of brownfield funding, to support the delivery of much needed homes
 - c.£40m in integrated transport budget, and
 - c.£12m in Adult Education Budget to focus on targeted skills provision that meets the needs of our local economy
- The County Council also resolved to apply to Government to move the date of the election of a Directly Elected Leader to May 2025, to coincide with the County Council elections. This was agreed with Government in late 2023 and the Council is scheduled to vote on the change of Governance at its meeting on 23 July 2024. In his Autumn Statement on 22 November 2023, the Chancellor also announced a further level to the Devolution Framework, Level 4, which sets a new ambition for Norfolk and reinforces the Council's position that Devolution is a journey.





What we said

2. Phase two of the Strategic Review will be developed in 2023, with implementation expected in 2024/25.

What we did

- The review conducted in 2023 delivered efficiencies and savings for the Council by:
 - Removing areas of duplication, including in support services,
 - Adjusting the number of management layers and improving spans of control
 - Improving the Council's organisational design to be more efficient in decision making and organisation of work.
 - Simplifying how the Council describes roles and organise into professional groupings for consistency and support career development and equality
- The learning from the first phase of this review has given managers the tools and knowledge to look at continuous improvement with the right capability and capacity. Services will continue to drive efficiencies through reviewing structures and models of work, as well as continue to deliver existing programmes of transformation in line with the design principles agreed in 2023.





What we said

3. Design principles for a Portfolio Governance transformation model to reduce duplication and improve efficiency have been agreed as part of the Strategic Review and the detailed design and implementation stages are being planned for delivery in 2023-2024.

What we did

- In April 2023 we began work to strengthen our governance of the portfolio of change across the council and ensuring strategic alignment and prioritisation. The approach is being co-designed and produced with departments to ensure that it supports the most effective approach to delivery of positive benefits and outcomes for the people of Norfolk.
- A phased approach has been taken to developing and implementing the model. A Portfolio Board has been set-up to provide oversight to the delivery of our corporately significant programmes. This is supported by the collaborative portfolio team which has members from the corporate centre of the council and service departments. We have recruited staff with specialist transformation skills to work alongside colleagues in directorates to improve efficiency, reduce duplication and deliver positive outcomes for those who use our services.
- As part of the portfolio management approach we also launched the Organisational Design Authority. This is a group that supports and steers the design of departments and teams within Norfolk County Council to ensure changes we make to our structure and functions matches the capability we need to deliver successfully. It consists of specialists in business and organisational change alongside services and functional specialists.





What we said

4. We shall continue to develop and learn from our Smarter Working Programme so hybrid-working facilities are meeting needs across the organisation

What we did

- The Smarter Working Programme has undertaken a range of activity which sought to optimise employee and service effectiveness. This includes assessing employee experience of hybrid working arrangements, updated training and support for NCC reception staff, and updating the County Hall Car Parking policy.
- Hybrid working remains highly valued by those whose roles allow them to make use of it, with flexibility, cost/time savings and better recruitment being key factors.
- As part of last year's consultation, Smarter Working has been absorbed into the new Continuous Improvement (CI) function with effect from January 2024. The processes and mechanisms to support this change were developed and embedded during January & February 2024. CI typically focuses on solving problems that affect colleagues across the organisation and are not owned by a single Executive Director.



What we said

5. We will regularly monitor and review the implementation of our Workforce Strategy, which runs to 2025, to ensure it is on-track and fit for purpose. This will include conducting surveys with employees amongst other metrics.

What we did

We have scheduled plans to review the workforce Strategy with the council's Executive Directors every 6 months. The results of the 2023 Employee Survey have been launched and there are plans to refresh the workforce strategy to look at what has been delivered and is working well, what gaps still exist and what changes to the longer term strategy requires, following a PESTLE analysis.





What we said

6. We will continue to review deliver our Digital Strategy, which focusses on key improvements such as public access to WiFi, automation of some council processes, and bolstering cyber-security.

What we did

- Digital connectivity across the County has continued to improve, with Superfast Broadband now available at over 97.3% of properties and Gigabit speed fibre to the property broadband now up to over 56.7%.
- The Council has provided and maintained a free to use LoRaWAN / IoT Innovation Network which now covers the whole of the County and enables sensors to connect to the Internet for various public and private sector use cases.
- Mobile coverage has also been improved through the first phase of the national Shared Rural Network Programme, and we have commissioned a new scheme to measure mobile coverage using refuse vehicles and fire appliances as they travel around the County.
- We have greatly increased Digital Inclusion Programme activities during 2023/24, helping thousands of residents to get online and develop greater digital skills and confidence, as well as providing over 1,000 laptops to help people who needed them.
- The Digital Strategy Programme of work has used automation and artificial intelligence (AI) tools to improve many aspects of the Councils operations
- We have continued to develop and deepen our cyber security capabilities in order to prevent cyber criminals attacks and minimise the time to respond to any disruption they may cause.



What we said

7. There will continue to be ongoing reviews of our property, determining where further consolidation and exploitation of assets can be achieved. Where possible, we will continue to release surplus property.

What we did

The Council has undertaken several reviews on properties in our portfolios, which have identified a number of opportunities to make the best use of our buildings, including releasing land where appropriate. These include, but are not limited to: Havenbridge House, Wensum Lodge, Norman House, Ipswich Road; as well as a number of small land parcels. Work is ongoing and will continue in line with the Council approved Strategic Asset Management Framework 21 – 26.

What we said

8. We will continue to deliver Net-Zero improvements through better cross-departmental working, including our climate change strategy which brings together various teams to deliver our key objectives.

What we did

The council has earmarked £22.5 million of capital funding to decarbonise its buildings as part of maintaining trajectory towards our net zero 2030 estate commitment. The money will be invested in improving building energy efficiency and shifting from gas or oil heating to low carbon heat pumps with work beginning in 2024. Around forty chargepoints are now up and running at County Hall for staff and visitors, and a further thirty chargepoints currently being put in across fifteen other sites including fire stations and libraries. These are enabling Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to transition their smaller emergency response vehicles from diesel to hybrid through 2024.



MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

In Corporate Delivery Plan 2023-2024 we provided some indicative vital signs which aligned with each of our corporate strategy priorities with a view to report back on these after a year had elapsed. Many of these vital signs have now changed in order to ensure that they are more meaningful metrics for measuring performance, and provide more alignment with our key activities and strategic priorities.

In order to view the most up to date vital sign data, readers should access our organisational performance reports which come to cabinet on a quarterly basis and are [publicly available here](#). The most recent reporting at the time of writing took place on the [cabinet meeting on 8 April 2024](#).





Norfolk County Council

Cabinet

Item No: 9

Report Title: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS)

Date of Meeting: 08 May 2024

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

Responsible Director: Ceri Sumner, Chief Fire Officer

Is this a Key Decision? No

If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: N/A

Executive Summary/Introduction from Cabinet Member

The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet, as Norfolk's Fire and Rescue Authority, of the outcomes from the recent HMICFRS inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS), highlighting the significant progress made, and outlining the subsequent Areas for Improvement (AFI) Action Plan in response to the inspection's findings.

Over a ten-week period, 21st August through 27th October 2023, HMICFRS conducted its third full inspection of NFRS. The final report, released 8th March 2024, presents an improving picture of our service's current standing and future trajectory.

Key findings:

- NFRS has made significant improvement since its last inspection. Out of the eleven assessed categories, it achieved a 'Good' grading in 3, 'Adequate' in 5, and a 'Requires Improvement' in the remaining 3. Progress has been made in 5 of the eleven categories.
- The previous Cause of Concern regarding Prevention, Safeguarding and Fatal Fire Reviews has been discharged, with HMICFRS recognising our "positive practise" around our fatal fire reviews regarding telecare providers.

- Positive feedback was highlighted around the following themes:
 - Prevention is a high priority: The service has made prevention a high priority, with significant improvements in staffing and time allocated to reducing risk.
 - Values and Culture: The service has well-defined values, and there is a positive workplace culture, with staff feeling empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours. This report also contains the progress made against the 35 recommendations set out in HMICFRS values and culture spotlight report [Values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services](#), as shown in Appendix 2.
 - Financial: The service is good at making sure it is affordable now and in the future. It has a clear medium-term financial strategy that aligns with its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). It has a sound understanding of its future financial challenges.

- The report acknowledges the ongoing improvement trajectory and highlights sixteen key areas which the service needs to address and report progress on. These form the basis of our AFI Action Plan (see Appendix 1). Of these, ten have persisted across all three previous inspections.

- HMICFRS require Fire Authorities to address their AFIs or provide rationale for areas they will not be seeking to improve. In addition to the detailed AFI Action Plan, NFRS has identified the underlying issues that have hindered progress; these are:
 - Systems and Transformation,
 - Emerging Burdens,
 - Quality Assurance and Performance Management,
 - Training and Development, and
 - Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

Recommendations:

1. **Cabinet receives the HMICFRS Inspection Report for NFRS ([Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2023–25: An inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service](#)) and acknowledges the improvements made.**
2. **Cabinet approves the AFI Action Plan and commits to formal reporting of progress into the Strategic Development Oversight Group (Appendix 1).**
3. **Cabinet endorses the requirements outlined to address the AFI Action Plan: with the 2024/25 cost being funded from Fire reserves,**

and 2025/26 requirements considered as part of the 2025/26 Budget process (set out in section 6.1).

4. **Cabinet acknowledges the progress made against the HMICFRS culture and values recommendations set out at Appendix 2.**

1. Background and Purpose

HMICFRS conducted their third full inspection of NFRS over a ten-week period from 21st August through 27th October 2023. NFRS senior team and Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Chair of the FRA), received immediate verbal feedback on the 26th of October, with the final report being released on 8th March 2024.

Since the last inspection, HMICFRS has expanded its grading system from a four-tier to a five-tier structure, to highlight areas requiring improvement more precisely and recognise good performance.

Outstanding	The FRS has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance
Good	The FRS has substantially demonstrated all the characteristics of good performance
Adequate	The FRS has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but we have identified areas where the FRS should make improvements
Requires Improvement	The FRS has demonstrated few, if any, of the characteristics of good performance, and we have identified a substantial number of areas where the FRS needs to make improvements
Inadequate	We have causes for concern and have made recommendations to the FRS to address them

The introduction of the 'Adequate' grade means a direct comparison between our outcomes in the 2021 and 2023 inspections is not possible, however the inspectorate has stated a change from a previous "good" to "adequate" does not indicate a decline in performance, except where explicitly mentioned in the report.

The previous inspection in 2021 graded Norfolk as 'Requires Improvement' across Effectiveness, Efficiency and People, with twenty-four AFI's across these categories, including a specific Cause for Concern regarding Prevention, Safeguarding and Fatal Fire Reviews.

Following the 2021 inspection, an investment to increase capacity in Prevention was made, including the introduction of new technology to improve efficiency. A policy was also created around major incident and fatal fire reviews which has so far led to significant learnings around the wildfires of 2022, as well as

NFRS leading a national initiative on telecare provision for vulnerable adults, which was noted as positive practise within the recent report.

2. HMICFRS Inspection Outcomes 2023/25

NFRS has made significant progress since its last inspection, and this is evidenced by the HMICFRS graded judgements.

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
	Understanding fire and risk	Public safety through fire regulation	Preventing fire and risk	
	Responding to major incidents	Responding to fires and emergencies	Right people, right skills	
	Future affordability	Best use of resources	Managing performance and developing leaders	
		Promoting values and culture		
		Promoting fairness and diversity		

We are pleased to report significant improvements in this inspection with NFRS now being judged as *adequate* or *good* in 8 of the eleven categories and having made clear improvement in 5 areas. The cause for concern relating to prevention has now been discharged with HMICFRS acknowledging the “service has made prevention a high priority”.

Sixteen AFI’s have been identified, and these have been brought together in the AFI Action Plan (Appendix 1).

As mentioned, introducing the ‘adequate’ grade makes direct comparisons more challenging. However, the table below provides assurance on progress and direction of travel (DoT).

Assessment Area	2021 Grade	2023 Grade	DoT
Understanding fires and other risks	Good	Good	↔
Preventing fires and other risks	Inadequate	Requires Improvement	↑
Protecting the public through fire regulation	Good	Adequate	↔
Responding to fires and other emergencies	Good	Adequate	↔
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	Good	Good	↔
Making best use of resources	Requires Improvement	Adequate	↑
Future affordability	Requires Improvement	Good	↑
Promoting the right values and culture	Requires Improvement	Adequate	↑
Getting the right people with the right skills	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement	↔
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Requires Improvement	Adequate	↑
Managing performance and developing leaders	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement	↔

While acknowledging the challenges that the service has faced over recent years, the inspectors highlighted the clear commitment to improve from both leaders and staff. They particularly noted the evident improvement in the services culture.

Culture is particularly important given the national focus on professional standards, behaviours and values within the fire sector, and previous concerns around bullying and harassment within Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. Activity to implement the 35 recommendations presented in the HMICFRS Values and Culture spotlight report from March 2023 ([Values and culture in fire and rescue services - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](#)) are detailed further in Appendix 2.

Our commitment to promoting the right values, behaviour, and culture is evident, with noticeable improvement in tackling bullying, harassment, and discrimination. High priority is given to workforce wellbeing, supported by our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, and Health and Safety measures. We have good plans to improve workforce efficiency through technology and innovation.

From an operational perspective, we have enhanced our understanding of fires and emergency risk, detailed in our CRMP. We continue to learn from our operational activity, and have improved how we gather, maintain, and share risk information.

Prevention activity is now a high priority, with proactive measures directed at understanding and mitigating fire-setting behaviour and conducting joint agency reviews after significant incidents.

Of note, we are highlighted for having **promising practice**:

The service undertakes significant incident and multi-agency fatal fire reviews improving outcomes both locally and nationally:

- emergency call management and mobilisation; and
- telecare alarms,
- approach to fire safety.

We work well with other stakeholders to reduce risk and protect our communities. As a result, our engagement, particularly those from seldom-heard groups, has strengthened. Our staff now understand how to identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable individuals.

The quality of our fire safety audits, and the proportionality of our enforcement actions stand out, reflecting that our staff have responded well to new legislation, increasing overall effectiveness.

The resilience of our 24/7 fire safety cover is good, with staff effectively collaborating with other enforcement agencies, and responding in a timely way to building and licensing consultations.

Our response to fires and other emergencies remains good, supported by up-to-date risk information, and Incident Commanders that are well trained and demonstrate a strong understanding of JESIP (Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme). We are well prepared for major and multi-agency incidents. This, alongside improved access to cross-border risk information, enables good working with other fire and rescue services, and ensures a good standard in training exercises. Additionally, we have improved how we keep the public informed.

We collaborate effectively with others, stay current with national learning, and play a leading role in the Norfolk Resilience Forum. Our continuity arrangements are robust, and we have improved how we allocate our resources to reduce risk.

We understand the financial challenges ahead, and proactively seek income generating opportunities, showing sound financial management and value for money, including strategic use of reserves.

3. Areas For Improvement

The inspectorate highlighted sixteen AFIs, which have been rigorously reviewed by the senior leadership team and other subject leads to identify the root cause of the issues. Focus has been given to the ten AFIs (marked with an asterix* in the list below) where insufficient progress has been made over past inspections – these will be the highest priority for action and improvement, however all sixteen will be addressed as set out in the action plan in Appendix 1. The sixteen AFIs are as follows:

1*	The service should ensure it targets its prevention work at people most at risk. This should include proportionate and timely activity to reduce risk.
2*	The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out home fire safety visits to an appropriate standard.
3*	The service should ensure staff work with businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.
4*	The service should make sure on-call staff are familiar with the risks in their local areas. And it should make sure staff have an understanding of fires in tall buildings, so they are better prepared to fight fires and carry out rescues safely.
5	The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.
6	The service needs to make use of new ways of working, including flexible workforce patterns, to make sure the services it provides are proportionate to risk and public safety.
7	The service should assure itself that all processes in place to support performance management are effective.
8*	The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours are not exceeded.
9*	The service should assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role.
10	The service should make sure that its staff can manage absence well
11	The service should make sure that managers have an effective process to monitor and assure staff competence and service provision to the public.
12*	The service should overcome the barriers it has identified to equal opportunity, so that its workforce better represents its community. This includes making sure staff understand the value of positive action and having a diverse workforce.
13*	The service should do more to make sure staff see promotion processes as transparent and fair
14*	The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop, and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.
15*	The service should assure itself it has an effective mechanism in place for succession planning, including senior leadership roles.
16	The service should put in place a system to actively manage staff careers with the aim of diversifying the pool of future and current leaders.

Analysis has been undertaken to understand the root cause against the lack of progress the persisting AFIs, alongside the additional 6. Five core themes have emerged which need to be addressed to make progress: Systems and Transformation, Emerging Burdens, Quality Assurance and Performance Management, Training and Development, and Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

- **Systems and Transformation** – Lack of strategic focus and misalignment with wider NCC processes, due to being an emergency service, have hindered NFRS ability to monitor, manage and improve services effectively, especially with a reliance on manual record-keeping systems. Although the adoption of a 5-year digital roadmap is a significant improvement, there is still a need for further investment and resources. Specifically, support is needed with HR systems and records to ensure robust management for multiple contracts and employee data. In addition, the service should leverage flexible workforce patterns more effectively to make sure its services are aligned with the varying levels of risk and public safety needs, maximising its operational efficiency and impact.

Due to the service's operational nature, where most senior leaders are on duty rotas to manage, oversee, or strategically respond to incidents 24/7, there is a noticeable lack of transformation capability. Transformation capacity, with in-depth service knowledge is required for driving improvements and implementing new technologies, strategies, and processes across the service, enhancing our efficiency, effectiveness, and staff wellbeing. Capacity is necessary to support QA insights for operational debriefs, develop ad hoc reports, support performance analysis, respond to national requests and enhance managerial oversight and learning.

- **Emerging Burdens** – The societal changes, including the cost-of-living crisis and deteriorations in mental health, have altered our incident profile, with corresponding increased demands for preventative measures, particularly safeguarding. This requires an increased response time for complex and high-risk HFSV from 30 days to 48 hours, aligning to fire sector best practice.

Economic growth and demographic changes, along with the advent of new technologies, such as Lithium-Ion Batteries in vehicles and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), coupled with the climate change impacts, have increased our risk and associated operational burden. Other examples include, the increased frequency of water rescues, despite the absence of statutory responsibility or funding, which highlights the services' need to adapt.

In response to these emerging risks, NFRS has relied on temporary or unfunded roles; these need to be stabilised to address the challenges now and in the future.

National priorities and recommendations from major incident reviews have also placed additional strain on resources, notably through the implementation of recommendations from the Manchester Arena and Grenfell Tower Inquiries, and the HMICFRS Culture and Values recommendations. NFRS has substantial work ahead in adopting the National Operational Guidance and Fire Standards.

Adding to our challenges, the upcoming end of the Home Office grant funding puts us at risk around Protection activity. This funding has been vital for our prevention and protection efforts and has supported key roles. We therefore aim to secure roles related to the AFI Action Plan within our revenue budget from 2025 to ensure sustained improvement and delivery.

- **Quality Assurance & Performance Management** – The effectiveness of our performance management in overseeing Prevention and Protection activities, as well as evaluating the quality of work, requires improvement. Corporate oversight of these functions is highlighted as insufficient; this is exacerbated by the limited processes and systems in place for assuring the quality of fire safety audits and prevention activities, alongside an absence of robust tools for measuring the service's overall effectiveness.

Operational learning is also vital for improving our service and ensuring safety of staff and the public. Despite having a robust policy, we are unable to implement operational learning activity, such as structured debriefs, due to lack of resource to undertake the anticipated 150 briefings per year. It is imperative that the service implement an effective system for staff learning and operational debriefs. This must be inclusive of our control staff to ensure a holistic approach to assurance activities.

- **Training and Development** – The effectiveness of our training systems and the absence of formal development programs for Station Managers and above pose significant risks to our staff's preparedness for future challenges. Delays in the implementation of a talent management process, aligned with sector best practices, have been primarily due to resource constraints. This gap in our training provision is exacerbated by insufficient monitoring of non-risk critical training and limited access for managers to their staff training records.

Our commitment to rectifying these issues is evident in our investment in a new learning management system, and a cloud-based competency tracking system widely adopted across 80% of UK Fire Services.

However, work is needed to fully address all issue identified within this area for improvement.

- **Equality and Diversity** - NFRS has actively progressed EDI activity, incorporating it into its leadership development strategies and outreach efforts. We have focused on adopting the National Core Code of Ethics and reaching out to better connect with communities who may perceive barriers to entry into the Fire Service.

Despite these efforts, our workforce diversity, particularly in gender and ethnic minority representation, remains the least diverse across all fire and rescue services in England. Recognising this, we have audited all fire stations, committing to refurbishments that not only make our spaces welcoming for all staff, but specifically address equality of welfare provision and improved zoning to reduce cross contamination. We have also established a shortfall in PPE to ensure all staff, irrespective of their role or physical requirements, have access to appropriate and fitting PPE.

However, attracting diverse applicants, especially for middle and senior-level positions, remains a challenge. To drive meaningful change, we are collaborating with the NCC EDI team to embed EDI principles into our operations.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

HMICFRS now requires the Fire and Rescue Authority either commit to making improvements in all areas identified as AFI or provide a rationale for not addressing them.

Additional funding is required for capacity, technology upgrades, and addressing AFI's to drive improvement.

5. Alternative Options

An option is not to address AFIs or aim to meet within existing resources.

NFRS are actively addressing the AFIs where possible. However, redirecting existing resources will strain already significant workloads and may require deprioritising routine tasks or compromise operations. This could potentially expose NFRS to operational and organisational risks. Grey book staff have operational responsibilities that consume a substantial part of their time.

The inability to move forwards ten AFIs over 3 inspection periods demonstrates the need to properly plan and resource these areas.

6. Financial Implications

Cabinet are asked to consider a total investment of £0.845m towards addressing the identified AFI's, with resource requirement for 2024/25 to be funded from Fire reserves (£0.279m). Endorsement in principle will allow resource to be recruited and improvement to start as soon as possible (NB some resource was previously put in place to address key gaps). The resource requirement for 2025/26 will be considered by Cabinet as part of the 2025/26 Budget Challenge process, which will culminate in the Council budget signed off by Full Council in February 2025.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 Staff:

See Appendix 1 action plan.

7.2 Property:

There are no property implications other than the pre-agreed Estates programme of work in conjunction with the Corporate Property Team.

7.3 IT:

A digital roadmap has been developed with NCC IMT with a five year horizon to ensure sufficient capacity and resource allocation.

8. Other Implications

8.1 Legal Implications:

Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS ([section 7.5 of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)). The statutory duties placed on Fire and Rescue Authorities have also been considered.

8.2 Human Rights Implications:

Addressing the 16 areas for improvement identified by the HMICFRS report will enable NFRS to significantly enhance community safety, building safety, and its emergency response capabilities. By doing so, it aims to improve public safety, thereby promoting and safeguarding the well-being and rights of Norfolk's communities. This includes the right to life, housing security, health and a safe environment.

8.3 Equality

A comprehensive range of evidence has been gathered and analysed, to enable NFRS to give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when developing improvement strategy. Alongside the recommendations of HMICFRS, this has involved reviewing data about people and services that might be affected (particularly people with protected characteristics), contextual information and commissioned research about local areas and populations - and crucially, the findings of our award-nominated public consultation with people from seldom-heard communities.

This has established that the recommendations set out in this report will significantly enhance access for disabled and older people in Norfolk and equality of opportunity for people with other protected characteristics.

Our strategy and operations are also guided by our equality impact assessment of our Community Risk Management Plan, published on our website [EqIA CRMP 2023-26](#)

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):

NFRS will continue to work with the Information Governance team to anticipate, identify and address any potential impacts on data protection. There are no specific requirements within this report

8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):

NFRS is committed to prioritising the health and safety of both its staff and the communities of Norfolk. The Appendix 1 action plan highlights improvements to our operations, training, and the well-being of our workforce. Implementing these will not only fulfil our duty of care to our staff but also ensure their readiness to respond effectively to emergencies. This approach will better address the risks facing the communities of Norfolk.

8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):

The recommendations within this report do not have any direct sustainability implications. NFRS aligns to the NCC policies unless resilience requirements dictate an alternative approach.

8.7 Any Other Implications:

Officers have considered all the implications which members should be aware of as far as reasonably practicable. Apart from those listed in the report (above), there are no other implications to take into account.

9. Risk Implications / Assessment

The risk implications of not addressing the AFIs are far reaching: some are linked to life risk for staff or the public. Detailed risk management approaches are undertaken within NFRS with the support of the NCC risk management team.

10. Recommendations

1. **Cabinet receives the HMICFRS Inspection Report for NFRS ([Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2023–25: An inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service](#)) and acknowledges the improvements made.**
2. **Cabinet approves the AFI Action Plan and commits to formal reporting of progress into the Strategic Development Oversight Group (Appendix 1).**
3. **Cabinet endorses the requirements outlined to address the AFI Action Plan: with the 2024/25 cost being funded from Fire reserves, and 2025/26 requirements considered as part of the 2025/26 Budget process (set out in section 6.1).**
4. **Cabinet acknowledges the progress made against the HMICFRS culture and values recommendations set out at Appendix 2.**

11. Background Papers

HMICFRS Inspection Report ([Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2023–25: An inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service](#))

HMICFRS Values and Culture Spotlight report [Values and culture in fire and rescue services - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectrates.gov.uk\)](#)

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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

AFI Action Plan (HMICFRS Report Recommendations)

RAG rating	Definition of target achievement
BLUE	The recommendation is complete
GREEN	The recommendation is on track with work well underway
AMBER	The recommendation is subject to ongoing work with some issues needing to be resolved
RED	The recommendation is not implemented and cannot be progressed

Areas for improvement may require multiple tasks to be completed by task owners from across the Service, before the recommendation can be closed.

Area For Improvement		Service Area	Due Date	Comment (<i>what have we done, what are we doing and what are we going to do?</i>)	Service Owner	RAG Status	DoT
							(Mar 24)
1	The service should ensure it targets its prevention work at people most at risk. This should include proportionate and timely activity to reduce risk.	Prevention	31/12/24	Utilise Personal Demographics Service (Exeter Data) to improve the targeting of our prevention activities. Key policies and procedures being reviewed. Embed the national Prevention fire standard. Prevention Lead essential to success of team.	Head of Prevention and Protection	Green	↑
2	The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out home fire safety visits to an appropriate standard.	Prevention	31/12/24	The introduction of 'Quick Screens' technology enables accurate and complete data capture, improving efficiency, reinforces referral and recording of community demographics. Some evaluation of HFSV is undertaken. With the increase in Home Fire Safety Visit additional capacity is required to co-ordinate evaluation, HFSV's, safeguarding activity and ensure compliance with fire standards.	Head of Prevention and Protection	Amber	↑
3	The service should ensure staff work with businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.	Protection	31/12/24	Key policies and procedures have been reviewed and new technology introduced to improve efficiency. Embed the national Protection fire standard. Business Engagement, and Hazardous Installations are currently provided through Home Office Protection uplift grant. These will be extended, however permanent funding sought. Ensure risks are thoroughly assessed within our inspection programmes. Ensure correct recording of UwFS. Undertake a trial of Primary Authority scheme for NFRS.	Head of Prevention and Protection	Green	↑
4	The service should make sure on-call staff are familiar with the risks in their local areas. And it should make sure staff have an understanding of fires in tall buildings, so they are	Response	01/04/25	District service plans will ensure that both familiarisation with local risk and understanding of tall buildings issues Implement virtual risk familiarisation visits and virtual tall building training for on-call staff (scoped and created by OSOs).	Head of Response	Green	↑

Appendix 1

	better prepared to fight fires and carry out rescues safely.			<p>Review the fires in tall buildings project lead to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>Head of Response will review District Plans March/April 2024 and ensure accountability with District Managers.</p> <p>Refresh On Call awareness of WRM.</p>			
5	The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.	Audit & Review / Response	01/04/25	<p>Operational Learning Policy is fit for purpose. Implementation not achieved due to capacity constraints in organising and facilitating structured debriefs as outlined in the policy.</p> <p>Average 150 structured debriefs per annum, which on average take 3 days to prepare, facilitate and complete. Additional capacity is need to undertake Operational Continuous Learning and Assurance activity and workload, increase assurance for Operational activity and prioritise organisation learning.</p> <p>A Systems and Intelligence Support capacity is necessary to support QA insights, develop ad hoc reports, support performance analysis, respond to national requests and enhance managerial oversight and learning.</p> <p>Ensure Control Room staff are fully involved in structured debriefing process (increase in capacity required).</p> <p>On-Call review already underway.</p>	Head of Planning and Performance	RED	↔
6	The service needs to make use of new ways of working, including flexible workforce patterns, to make sure the services it provides are proportionate to risk and public safety.	People / Response	31/12/25	<p>Review the Whole-Time Duty system engaging with staff and rep bodies to identify and co-design practical alternative flexible workforce patterns.</p> <p>Review the NFCC Innovative Working Patterns case studies and tools.</p> <p>Update flexible working policy part of encouraging a more diverse workforce.</p> <p>Create capacity for transformation work as not sustainable as part of AM/ GM roles.</p>	Head of People & Head of Response	AMBER	↑
7	The service should assure itself that all processes in place to support performance management are effective.	Response	31/12/24	<p>District performance challenge sessions (quarterly) implemented to ensure performance against targets.</p> <p>Quarterly 121s in place with Districts.</p> <p>Continue to improve performance metrics and visibility of data for staff</p>	<p>Head of Response</p> <p>Head of Planning and Performance</p>	Green	↑

Appendix 1

8	The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours are not exceeded.	People	01/04/25	<p>Workforce planning and competence manager appointed.</p> <p>Implement a system that allows managers to monitor staff hours across multiple contracts – current HR systems are not able to do this.</p> <p>The proposed Systems and Intelligence Support capacity to deliver reporting on staff work hours, providing managers with workload oversight, drive improvement and determine future system requirements.</p> <p>Review and update our policies regarding secondary employment and dual contract staff. Review NFCC Model Working Time Regulations Policy</p> <p>Resolve data quality issues that exist with HR systems and records to ensure robust management for multiple contracts and employee data.</p>	Head of People	Amber	↑
9	The service should assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role.	People	01/04/25	<p>Integrate management skills, including EDI and Safeguarding, into our training plans to address current capacity issues. Implement our new LMS system to deliver mandatory non-risk critical training programme, complementing operational training.</p> <p>Establish standardised training records based on roles, ensuring completion of training requirements.</p> <p>Develop tools for managers to monitor staff training compliance.</p> <p>Investment required for comprehensive course management and requalification. Implement modules to enhance assurance, eliminate single points of failure, and improve process efficiency. Create capacity (Fire Standards Trainers) to ensure training delivery is NOG compliant.</p>	Head of People	AMBER	↑
10	The service should make sure that its staff can manage absence well.	People	01/04/25	<p>The existing absence management training is being revised and will become mandatory for all managers in our new learning management system.</p> <p>HR is reviewing all absence management cases, escalating appropriately.</p> <p>Update our current policy and procedure.</p> <p>HR to ensure timely completion adhering to policy.</p>	Head of People	GREEN	↑
11	The service should make sure that managers have an effective process to monitor and assure staff competence and service provision to the public.	People	01/04/25	<p>Develop and implement formal development programmes for Station Managers and above.</p> <p>Implement a leadership programme aligned to NFCC, and tailored to NFRS needs.</p> <p>Implement Leading and developing Fire Standard</p>	Head of People	RED	↔

Appendix 1

				Due to the additional workload, create capacity with additional Fire Standards Training to coordinate and manage the programme.			
12	The service should overcome the barriers it has identified to equal opportunity, so that its workforce better represents its community. This includes making sure staff understand the value of positive action and having a diverse workforce.	People	31/12/24	<p>We have a Community Engagement Officer in place. Their role is to enhance our understanding of local communities and improve outreach efforts. This includes targeting groups who may perceive barriers to entry into the Fire Service, particularly seldom-heard groups who might not typically consider firefighting as a career.</p> <p>We are delivering a programme of staff workshops to explore culture, values, and our core code of ethics.</p> <p>Develop core training on EDI topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism • Sexual Harassment in the workplace • Allyship 	Head of People	GREEN	↑
13	The service should do more to make sure staff see promotion processes as transparent and fair.	People	31/12/24	<p>We have implemented a new promotion process for Supervisory and Middle managers, based on performance at assessment centres. This process ensures fairness through standardisation and moderation.</p> <p>Commission the NCC Audit Team to provide independent assurance for our next promotional process, scheduled for September 2024.</p> <p>Continue efforts to attract skills and talent from the wider sector and other industries.</p>	Head of People	GREEN	↑
14	The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop, and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.	People	31/12/24	<p>Adopt the NFCC talent management system to identify high potential staff and enable fair, transparent succession planning. Utilise NFCC Talent Management Toolkit</p> <p>Explore use of NFCC Supervisory, Middle and Executive Leadership Development Programme.</p> <p>Introduce development pathways for middle and senior managers.</p> <p>Embed the Leading the Service Fire Standard. Undertake assurance activity.</p>	Head of People	AMBER	↑
15	The service should assure itself it has an effective mechanism in place for succession planning, including senior leadership roles.	People	01/04/25	<p>Adopt the NFCC talent management system, to identify high potential staff for succession planning.</p> <p>Introduce development pathways for middle and senior managers.</p> <p>Embed Leading and Developing People Fire Standard.</p> <p>Embed the Leading the Service Fire Standard. Undertake assurance activity.</p>	Head of People	AMBER	↑
16	The service should put in place a system to actively manage staff careers with the aim of diversifying	People	31/03/26	The service acknowledges the need for greater workforce diversity. While the NFCC direct entry scheme is not being considered due to	Head of People	GREEN	↑

Appendix 1

<p>the pool of future and current leaders.</p>			<p>cost, all roles at Group Manager and above are advertised externally via the NFCC jobs website.</p> <p>Despite the absence of a formal direct entry scheme, the Service actively recruits direct entry into senior positions, resulting in a 50% female representation at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).</p> <p>Staff performance is continually reviewed to identify potential future leaders who could be supported in their development.</p> <p>The Service is committed to improving workforce diversity and is working with our Community Engagement Officer to review current and future recruitment plans to enhance diversity at the recruitment stage.</p>			
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Appendix 2 HMICFRS Culture and Values Spotlight Report Recommendations

RAG rating	Definition of target achievement
BLUE	The recommendation is complete
GREEN	The recommendation is on track with work well underway
AMBER	The recommendation is subject to ongoing work with some issues needing to be resolved
RED	The recommendation is not implemented and can not be progressed

	Recommendation	Due Date	Comment (<i>what have we done, what are we doing and what are we going to do?</i>)	BRAG Status
1	Chief Fire Officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.	1 October 2023	NFRS has introduced the Crimestoppers speak up service as a fire specific reporting line with supporting comms and posters and guidance on raising concerns across all informal and formal routes. Email the chief address set up. Norfolk County Council provides a whistleblowing line which is easily accessed via intranet and the public facing website.	BLUE
3	Chief Fire Officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.	1 June 2023	Direct support is provided through an allocated welfare officer. Further support is available through the NCC dignity at work line, wellbeing team and employee assistance program, and peer wellbeing champions.	BLUE
4	Chief Fire Officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.	1 June 2023	The system for updating staff is part of the relevant policies. All cases have an aligned HR case worker to support this. Head of people, HR casework supervisor and a new lead investigator form the professional standards function.	BLUE
5	Chief Fire Officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief Fire Officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way	1 June 2023	Clear guidance on all reporting systems available on myNet. NCC whistleblowing policy and guide available on myNet and website. Clear guidance on accessing support available on noticeboards, myNet and FireCare pages.	BLUE

NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

	that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.		NFRS website updated to include links to NCC complaints and the speak up line. Email directly to the CFO and DCFO address set up. FRS speak up line implemented with posters in all workplaces. Dignity at work hotline set up to advise individuals.	
9	Chief Fire Officers should: immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve; and make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board.	1 January 2024	Existing policy included baseline personnel security standard checks, non-police personnel vetting, and DBS for relevant posts. Vetting policy has been updated in line with the changes to the rehabilitation of offenders (exemptions). Checks in place for all new staff. Checks for existing staff are 80% complete by 31.3.24, those outstanding are due to sickness absence, maternity leave etc and we aim to fully complete by 31.7.24.	GREEN
10	Chief Constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.	1 September 2023	We have an existing relationship with Norfolk Police to enable the appropriate use of information under the Common Law Police Disclosure Process.	BLUE
12	Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.	1 March 2024	Awaiting a review of relevant fire standards following changes produced in February. Recent updates to bullying and harassment, and grievance policies are believed to be sufficient to meet the standard.	GREEN
14	Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	1 March 2024	Awaiting a review of relevant fire standards following changes produced in February. Recent updates to bullying and harassment, and grievance policies are believed to be sufficient to meet the standard.	GREEN
17	Chief Fire Officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:	With immediate effect,	CFO has made suitable arrangements with HMICFRS and is providing regular updates	BLUE

NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

	involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; are of a serious nature; or relate to Assistant Chief Fire Officers or those at equivalent or higher grades.			
18	Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	1 August 2024	Direct support is provided through an allocated welfare officer. Further support is available through the NCC dignity at work line, wellbeing team and employee assistance program, and peer wellbeing champions. All cases have an aligned HR case worker to support staff.	BLUE
20	Chief Fire Officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard and its leading and developing people standard.	1 June 2023	NFRS has recently reviewed its approach to fire standards and work on these specific standards will follow.	AMBER
21	Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (Assistant Chief Fire Officer equivalent and above) in service.	1 June 2023	360 feedback delivers for all SLT members by Real World Group. In house 360 system has been developed for ongoing development.	BLUE
22	Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports	1 September 2023	In house 360 system has been developed and is being trialled for ongoing development. Access to 360 feedback for new and developing managers will be made available through the NFCC's supervisory, middle and executive leadership programmes.	GREEN
23	Chief Fire Officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the leading and developing people standard. They should show how they act on this feedback.	1 June 2023	Annual staff survey covers these areas and is followed with an action plan. Developing shorter but more frequent temperature check surveys.	GREEN
24	Chief Fire Officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, watch and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.	1 October 2023	Developing shorter but more frequent temperature check surveys. Monitoring of quantitative sections of 360 feedback. Analysis of grievance, bullying and harassment allegations, conduct processes and speak up reports providing indicators of issues within specific teams. Remedial action in progress.	GREEN
26	As a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, Chief Fire Officers and the National Fire Chiefs Council should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in	1 October 2023	Three leadership development options available to all existing and potential leaders but challenges identified in capacity and buy in for staff to attend. Further review of leadership development programme is required.	AMBER

	management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.			
27	Chief Fire Officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit.	1 June 2023	Through the NCC EDI team, NFRS has sector leading EqlAs and a robust system to ensure that they are completed.	BLUE
28	Chief Fire Officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.	1 June 2023	Sources of data are inconsistent as the self-reporting tool in MyOracle is not well used by staff but guidance is being provided. Planning and performance lead working with NCC information & analytics and HR to create a dashboard based on NFCC toolkit and the emerging culture dashboard	AMBER
32	Chief Fire Officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.	1 June 2023	Succession planning needs to be implemented as part of our planned talent management system. Direct entry will be considered through review of the NFCC program.	GREEN
33	Chief Fire Officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity.	1 August 2023	NFRS has introduced a number of staff with diverse backgrounds into leadership positions, including the Chief Fire Officer. Investment into prevention, protection and people teams has introduced new progression pathways. Leadership development opportunities have been expanded to professional services staff.	BLUE
34	Chief Fire Officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services.	With immediate effect	Core code of ethics has been added to our successful cultural framework to create NFRS values and behaviours. Familiarisation sessions are being delivered to all staff. Core code e-learning has been added to the maintenance of competence cycle through the new learning management system and all staff are required to complete it. Work is ongoing to embed the code into policy reviews.	GREEN

Numbers relate to specific recommendations and those numbers which have been omitted are due to that recommendation not being an area of fire and rescue service responsibility

Cabinet

Item No: 10

Report Title: Climate Action Plans - Tranche 3

Date of Meeting: 8th May 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Eric Vardy (Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste)

Responsible Director: Harvey Bullen (Director of Strategic Finance)

Is this a Key Decision? No

Executive Summary

In June 2023, Norfolk County Council launched its Climate Strategy. The strategy sets out how the council can address its own carbon footprint and its role in supporting Norfolk's transition to become a greener and more resilient county. With this strategic statement in place, action plans are needed to help translate the vision and priorities of the strategy into practical implementation. These action plans will be reported and refreshed annually to provide accountability for the delivery of the Climate Strategy. Following the endorsement of the first and second tranche of climate actions by Cabinet in October 2023 and March 2024 respectively, this paper proposes the third tranche of actions for Cabinet's review. These cover our initiatives relating to commercial and industrial sectors, climate adaptation, transport, our companies and our staff.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 1. Approve the third tranche of actions as set out in this report.**

1 Background and purpose

- 1.1 Launched in June 2023, Norfolk County Council's Climate Strategy set 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.
- 1.2 The council's ambition and comprehensive approach to climate change has been recognised in the 2023 Council Climate Action Scorecards, where Norfolk County Council was independently ranked second among the UK county councils for its climate action related initiatives.
- 1.3 Looking beyond carbon reduction, the climate strategy considers in tandem the close relationship between climate action and nature recovery, the jobs and growth opportunities from the expanding green economy, and how adaptation is needed to protect our local services and communities. This is reflected in the seven 'focus areas' that make up the strategy:
 - Reducing our estate emissions
 - Reducing our indirect emissions
 - Addressing Norfolk's county-wide emissions
 - Promoting a green economy for Norfolk
 - Climate adaptation
 - Ensure nature has space to recover and grow
 - Engage and collaborate.
- 1.4 With the strategy in place, we set out the governance procedures to oversee its delivery and provide public accountability. Action plans are an appropriate governance tool that translate strategic vision into practical implementation — enabling member and public monitoring of the strategy's delivery.
 - Tranche 1 – Established programmes, often where the council has greater control, and plans can be put together quickly;
 - Tranche 2 – Programme areas with some level of maturity in plan development but requiring refinement;
 - Tranche 3 – Programme areas with less mature plans and/or requiring external engagement as NCC's role is less direct, and there may be

significant interdependencies (for example, national guidance for transport carbon quantification of local transport policies).

- 1.5 Alongside approving the tranching approach, the first tranche of actions was endorsed by Cabinet at the meeting in October 2023, covering actions relating to the council’s estate, procurement, county-wide digital connectivity, and nature recovery. The second tranche of actions was endorsed in March 2024 and focused on energy, waste and the circular economy, green skills and sustainable tourism.
- 1.6 This paper now introduces the third tranche of actions which relate to commercial and industrial sectors, climate adaptation, transport, our companies and our staff.
- 1.7 An overview of the anticipated content and timings of the three tranches is set out in the table below.

Tranche	Tranche content (with reference to focus area in the Climate Strategy)	Committees
1	Our estate (focus area 1) Procurement (focus area 2) Digital connectivity (focus area 3) Nature recovery (focus area 6)	Infrastructure and Development (I&D) Select Committee: September 2023 Cabinet: October 2023
2	Energy (focus area 3) Waste & circular economy (focus area 3) Green skills (focus area 4) Sustainable tourism (focus area 4)	I&D Select Committee: January 2024 Cabinet: March 2024
3	Business mileage (focus area 2) Our companies (focus area 2) Building and planning (focus area 3) Transport (focus area 3) Commercial and industrial (focus area 3) Climate adaptation (focus area 3) Engagement and collaboration (focus area 3)	I&D Select Committee: March 2024 Cabinet: May 2024

2 Proposal

Tranche 3 actions

2.1 This report brings the third tranche of actions for review by Cabinet. The list of actions is provided in full below.

Heading

Focus area 3: County-wide emissions

Commercial & Industrial

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
Support the re-establishment of the Norfolk Clean Growth Taskforce to facilitate behaviour change in the industrial and commercial sectors and encourage the sharing of best practice. This would include representatives across the business, utilities and public sectors.	2024/25	No additional funding – existing staff resource	G&I
Support Norfolk’s local business sector in their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint, through schemes such the Carbon Charter.	2024/25	Existing staff resource. Any funding needs will be subject to business case approval and budget or external funding identification.	G&I
Work with local networks to support SMEs (small and medium enterprises) on their journey to net zero.	2024/25	No additional funding – existing staff resource	G&I
Facilitate heat network opportunity identification by using our ability to help link industrial heat sources and potential heat customers with developers.	Ongoing	No additional funding – existing staff resource	G&I

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
<p>Take forward Seaweed in East Anglia (SEA) – pilot to develop a sustainable and viable seaweed industry in Norfolk. The project builds on challenges identified as part of the Algae Innovation Platform. The platform brings 90 local, domestic and international stakeholders together to understand how to develop a sustainable and viable seaweed industry. The project will work with partners in the Netherlands, already implementing sea farms.</p>	2024	Funding secured - Norfolk Investment Framework	G&I
<p>Take forward Net Zero East RENEW - feasibility study into the re- diversion of rainwater, surface and drainage water towards key stakeholders or storage locations across Norfolk. The study will consider how rediverting rainwater, surface and drainage water to shared infrastructure could benefit cross-sector demands, providing recommendations to policymakers. Four concept design locations include St. Germans (re-use of drainage water), Bacton (shared desalination assets), Scottow Enterprise Park (for rainwater capture) and Caister (involving treated effluent re-use).</p>	2024	Funding secured - Norfolk Investment Framework	G&I

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
Clean Hydrogen Strategy - develop a detailed clean hydrogen strategy for the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor (CNTC) area. The strategy will drive forward the delivery of a clean hydrogen economy in the CNTC area and will therefore support Norfolk's wider progress towards net-zero.	2024	Funding secured - Norfolk Investment Framework	G&I
<p>Agri-food Industrial Decarbonisation - Develop a Norfolk-wide industry-led roadmap, establishing how best to support agri-food and land management to decarbonise by capitalising on local strategic opportunities.</p> <p>Project will use knowledge from the large industrial emitters across Norfolk such as British Sugar, Bacton, Palm Paper and the two Power Stations (Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn) to support SME peer-to-peer learning in the agri-food sector and beyond.</p>	2024	Funding secured - Norfolk Investment Framework	G&I
Norwich Solar System – feasibility to establish a solar consortium in the Norwich Business Improvement area into, to use the energy generated. Initial focus of research will be on the potential development of rooftop solar panels in Norwich and will include a survey of potential sites for installations, with the final report setting out the methodology required to develop rooftop energy generation offer.	2024	Funding secured - Norfolk Investment Framework	G&I

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
Norfolk Rural EV Charging Point Pilot - increase the availability of public electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs), particularly in rural communities. The project seeks to make use of existing public and private infrastructure and incubate the growth of EV ownership by increasing available facilities. The project will establish a charging network initiative and improve user experience through a universal payment, maintenance and support system.	2024	Funding secured - Norfolk Investment Framework	G&I
Construction of the Great Yarmouth Operations & Maintenance Campus: construction commenced in September 2023. The campus will support growth in Norfolk's offshore wind sector, supporting UK transition to Net Zero through renewable energy generated. The campus is set to create 288,700 square feet of lettable space and up to 650 jobs, as well as drive investment in the renewable energy sector in the region	2025	Funding secured – blend of funding with contributions from NCC, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Norfolk pooled business rates and government grant.	G&I

Transport

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
Continue to deliver the Local Transport Plan and Local Transport Plan 4 Implementation Plan , and other localised transport strategies across Norfolk, which complement the Climate Strategy.	Ongoing	Scheme specific	Transport and G&I

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
Review any guidance issued by government on Local Transport Plans and use this to inform future iterations of transport planning and strategy work across Norfolk.	Guidance dependent	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Transport and G&I
In the absence of government guidance, take proactive steps to investigate carbon reduction from transport in Norfolk, including commissioning our term consultants to model carbon in relation to the Norfolk transport context as well as potential lower carbon pathways.	2024	Resourced through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) budget, formed of a preparation grant from Department for Transport and pooled business rates	Transport and G&I

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<p>Make sustainable and active travel attractive in Norfolk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working in partnership with First Bus to deliver the 70 electric buses funded by the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) programme. <li>• implementing the following public transport schemes through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £12m worth of new or enhanced services <li>- reduced single fares in King's Lynn, Thetford, and Gt. Yarmouth <li>- 20 improved bus stops with new shelters, seating and real-time information screens <li>- 4 new travel hubs linking buses, walking and cycling <li>- 15 bus priority schemes across Norwich, Gt. Yarmouth and King's Lynn <li>- Bus and cycle route between the airport and the airport industrial estate (TCF) <li>- Norwich Bus Station travel hub (TCF) 	<p>2024</p> <p>2024/25</p>	<p>Funding secured – government grant and First Bus match funding</p> <p>Funding secured – government grants from Department for Transport</p>	<p>Transport</p> <p>Transport</p>

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> finalising Norfolk County Council's Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Strategy alongside the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans which cover Norfolk. 	2024	Funding secured - existing NCC budgets	Transport and G&I

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completing the following walking, wheeling and cycling improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heartsease Roundabout (TCF) - Bowthorpe travel hub (TCF) - Mile Cross Norwich walking and cycling facilities - Middleton Road, Gt Yarmouth, cycle lanes and crossings - Jellicoe Road, Gorleston, cycle lanes and crossings - Old Hunstanton A149, shared use - Fleggburgh A1064, crossing - Quebec Road, Dereham, crossing - Brundall The Street, crossings - Hethersett, Back Lane, crossing - Edward Benefer Way, King's Lynn, crossing - Sandringham, A149, crossing - Gayton Road, King's Lynn, crossing - Low Road, Wotton Road, King's Lynn, crossing - Edward Benefer Way, King's Lynn, cycle link - Bergen Way, King's Lynn, crossing 	2024/25	Funding secured – Active Travel England grants and King's Lynn Town Deal funds	Transport

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> working in partnership with shared micro-mobility operators <u>to increase the number of kilometres travelled</u> in Norfolk using shared micro-mobility, and track the carbon savings associated with this usage. 	2024/25		Transport
<p>Support the electrification of vehicles for domestic, business and freight purposes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilitating the delivery of 66 charging points in residential areas where few people have driveways (current Norwich on-street charging pilot). facilitating ultrafast charging on main routes, for example reviewing whether Harford Park & Ride might be a suitable site for this. facilitating destination charging in tourist areas through the LEVI project producing a case study or studies relating to management of electric vehicle fleets 	<p>2024</p> <p>2024</p> <p>2024</p> <p>24/25</p>	<p>Funding secured - chargepoint operator. Profit-share applies</p> <p>Income opportunity – commercial lease and/or profit-share</p> <p>Funding secured – government grants</p> <p>No additional funding - Officer time</p>	<p>Transport</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Procurement</p>

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exploring options for supporting businesses with low carbon last mile deliveries, building on existing project such as the e-cargo bike share scheme for businesses operating in Norwich's Air Quality Management Area. 	2024/25	Business case and funding options to be considered for any emerging projects	Transport
<p>Work with the Growth and Investment team to ensure that any work on the Norfolk-wide Local Area Energy Plan includes work to support the decarbonisation of transport, for example through identifying strategic sites where capacity may be required to meet both building energy and transport energy demand, to ensure that these can be considered holistically rather than in isolation. Plus, ensure that any renewable energy generation is linked to low carbon transport systems if appropriate (e.g. EVs can be used to balance out peaks in renewable energy supply).</p>	24/25	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Transport

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<p>Continue to collaborate with partners at a local and regional level, such as Transport East. As well as continuing to work with national and international funding bodies (Department for Transport [DfT], Active Travel England [ATE], Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs [DEFRA]) etc to leverage additional external grant funds for lower carbon transport options. Previous successful funding bids include the Zero Emission Buses Regional Area (ZEBRA) bid for 70 electric buses in Norwich, the DEFRA-funded e-cargo bike share scheme for businesses in Norwich and Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding for Electric Vehicle infrastructure, as well as ATE where significant funding for active travel schemes has been secured in the past.</p>	24/25	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Transport and G&I
<p>Collaborate with Norwich City Council, District Council and Borough Council colleagues regarding air quality, both to raise awareness of air quality issues and to improve air quality, which often has corresponding impacts on carbon, for example through the Countywide Air Quality group and joint funding bids to secure funds for delivery.</p>	24/25	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Transport and Public Health

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<p>Improve data collection to ensure that we have a robust evidence base for decision making around lower carbon transport, including making use of emerging technologies such as AI count technology which can count how many different types of road user are using a stretch of footway/carriageway using recognition technology (rather than methods which involve manual counting).</p>	<p>24/25</p>	<p>At present, funded through existing staff resource. Where necessary, cost effectiveness and funding options to be considered for related initiatives as opportunities arise.</p>	<p>Transport, Highways, PH and G&I</p>

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
<p>Ensure that transport contract procurement/re-procurement includes appropriate requirements and/or key performance indicators around carbon and climate change. This links to actions in Tranche 1 relating to procurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a carbon reduction strategy for the passenger transport procurement category (Procurement) - Engage with districts through the Norfolk Climate Change Partnership (NCCP) on aligning hackney and private hire licensing arrangements with the transition to lower carbon passenger transport contracting (Procurement) - Engage with passenger transport operators about barriers and opportunities for reducing the emissions related to home-to-school transport provision (Passenger transport) - Undertake preparatory work relating to new highways-related contract ensuring carbon/climate are embedded in the process 	2024	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Transport, Highways and Procurement
<p>Investigate opportunities to improve network resilience in light of potential impacts of extreme weather and climate change, for example sensor technology and variable message signs could be used to detect and warn of flooding/advise of diversionary routes.</p>	24/25	Cost effectiveness and funding options to be considered for any emerging projects	Transport and Highways

Action	Date	Funding	Action Owner
Identify opportunities to work with businesses and residents to encourage car-sharing and shared vehicles (car clubs) across Norfolk.	24/25	Existing staff time – any car club etc anticipated to be self-funding and/or grant funded by others	Transport

Focus area 5: Climate adaptation

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
Produce a strategic climate risk framework outlining key near and long-term risks relating to the council's functions and services, and our approach to managing each risk.	October 2024	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Procurement & Sustainability
Engage with the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research based at the University of East Anglia on identifying joint external funding opportunities towards applying their data modelling expertise to better understand climate risks across Norfolk. The Tyndall Centre is a world-renowned climate research institution who recently led the development of the first data model to assess climate risks and adaptation across the UK for biodiversity, agriculture, infrastructure and urban areas.	2024	Exploring external funding opportunities	Procurement & Sustainability

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
Support the development of the Norfolk Water Strategy Programme with core partners Anglian Water, the Nature Conservancy and Water Resources East. The Programme identifies ways to invest in nature-based solutions that can complement grey infrastructure to help secure Norfolk's long term water resilience. In 2024 they are launching a business case for a Water Fund to draw private investment for nature-based initiatives.	2024	No additional funding – existing staff resource	G&I
Respond to upcoming consultations by Anglian Water and Cambridge Water on proposals for the Fens reservoir project, including plans to host a small surface level reservoir near Bexwell in Norfolk.	2025	No additional funding – existing staff resource	G&I

Focus area 2: Indirect emissions

Our Companies

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
Norse to publish a group net zero strategy that aligns with the council's Climate Strategy by summer.	2024	Norse staff time to develop strategy individual business cases for specific initiatives will need to be considered by Norse board for cost effectiveness	Norse
Council to incorporate suitable carbon targets in the renegotiated highways routine maintenance service level agreement (SLA) with the Council.	2024	Staff time to negotiate; adoption of alternative materials and techniques where practicable and cost effective	Highways

<p>All Repton Property Development Limited developments since June 2023 have been either designed to be fitted with a heat pump or built as heat-pump ready (avoiding microbore pipes, and sufficient cupboard space for the hot water cylinder).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current schemes that started in 2022 or later are being developed with low carbon air-source heat pumps rather than gas boilers, ahead of regulatory requirements. This covers 78 homes on 3 sites. • Repton will continue to install non-fossil-fuel heating wherever practicable. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Commercial decision by the company based on market demand</p> <p>Commercial decision by the company based on market demand</p> <p>Commercial decision by the company based on market demand</p>	<p>Repton Property Development Limited (Repton)</p>
<p>All Repton homes that have parking spaces have had either an EV charger or cable routing for a charger as standard since 2023 ahead of regulatory requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all 200 Repton homes at Hopton will have an EV charger, including those commenced before this became a regulatory requirement. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2026</p>	<p>Commercial decision by the company based on market demand; for future homes a regulatory requirement.</p>	<p>Repton</p> <p>Repton</p>
<p>Repton is converting redundant NCC property to deliver high-quality homes that minimise embedded carbon through using existing structural elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at Hunstanton Repton will deliver 11 units 	<p>2024</p>	<p>Commercial decision by the company based on market demand.</p>	<p>Repton</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repton is seeking planning permission for 29 further such homes at Trowse and Sedgeford. 		A decision to proceed would be a commercial decision by the company based on market demand.	
Repton will provide information to buyers and tenants about how to set up their boilers or heat pumps most economically.	2024	Negligible cost	Repton
Repton will explore buyer interest in 'bill free' residential developments in its schemes with a combination of solar, battery packs and heat pumps.	2024	A decision to proceed would be a commercial decision by the company based on market demand.	Repton
Hethel Engineering Centre to deliver Phase 4 extension to BREEAM 'Excellent' rating, subject to planning approval. This would make it net zero in operation and put it in the top 10% of UK new non-domestic building stock in terms of energy performance.	2025		Hethel Innovation Limited (Hethel)
Develop business case for further solar development on site at Hethel Engineering Centre, with an aim to quadruple current generation. This includes exploring joint renewables projects with Lotus, including the Indus project funding opportunity.	2025	Hethel staff resource to develop cases then will be assessed for cost effectiveness and funding options by Hethel board.	Hethel
Explore feasibility of replacing fossil fuel heating sources at Hethel Engineering Centre through Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant funding.	2025	Hethel board will need to assess budget capacity and cost effectiveness of capital investment with PSDS grant support.	Hethel

Hethel, Lotus and NCC to explore feasibility of joint application to Department for Transport's 'Rural Transport Accelerator' fund to improve the transport connections to the site.	2024	Relates to an external funding bid.	Hethel
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Our Staff

Action	Date	Funding	Owner
Develop 'introduction to our Climate Strategy' training sessions for staff and councillors to help raise awareness of our commitments and understanding of climate issues in Norfolk more broadly.	2024	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Strategy, Design & Delivery team
Develop a package of actions by autumn 2024 for embedding awareness amongst staff of the council's commitments on climate and opportunities to reduce both emissions and cost through careful day-to-day management.	2024	No additional funding – existing staff resource	Strategy, Design & Delivery team

3 Impact of the Proposal

- 3.1 The action plans will bring together initiatives taking place across the council that help it to address climate change. They will form the basis of reporting to members and the public for oversight of the council's delivery of its Climate Strategy.

4 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1 Action plans help to translate the strategic vision into practical implementation and provides accountability to members and the public. Cabinet approved a recommendation to publish action plans in May this year, therefore this proposal is fulfilling that recommendation.
- 4.2 Given the Climate Strategy's breadth of scope, Cabinet agreed in October 2023 to bring forward action plans in tranches. This is to maintain momentum in developing the governance framework for the strategy's delivery. A tranching approach also gives members more opportunity to review actions across different thematic areas than if they were to be released in one single list.
- 4.3 Publishing action plans follows good practice adopted by other local authorities and enhances the council's reputation in relation to climate governance.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Cabinet could decide to not publish a third tranche of actions, but this would be inconsistent with the previous decisions to publish three tranches. Cabinet could also decide to omit particular items from the plan.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The action plans do not have direct financial implications but their content relates to initiatives which do. Where these initiatives are not already in progress and represent key decisions, they will be brought forward for consideration in their own right.
- 6.2 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 for Select Committee review in summer 2024.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 Staff – the coordination of the actions will be undertaken within existing staff resource. The staff resource needs for specific actions are to be met through the respective council departments owning each action.

7.2 Property – reference to the capital investment towards making the council's estate 'Future Ready' was part of the tranche 1 actions approved by Cabinet in October 2023.

7.3 IT – no direct implications.

8 Other implications

8.1 Legal implications – no direct legal implications.

8.2 Human rights Implications – no direct human rights implications.

8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) – the publication of the action plan in itself does not have equality impacts. The individual actions may have equality implications which have either been assessed [in the case of decisions already made] or will be assessed at the time of detailed implementation.

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) – no direct data protection impact assessment implications.

8.5 Sustainability implications – climate action plans represent a governance tool to help ensure the council contributes to a sustainable Norfolk.

8.6 Any other implications – no further material implications identified.

9 Risk Implications/Assessment

9.1 Individual actions may have risk implications which have either been assessed [in the case of decisions already made] or will be assessed at the time of detailed implementation.

9.2 Action plans represent a governance tool that reduce the risk of not delivering against the Climate Strategy through providing a framework for member and public oversight of progress.

10 Select Committee Comments

10.1 [Infrastructure & Development Select Committee](#) reviewed the actions at their meeting on 13 March 2024, and endorsed their progression for consideration by Cabinet.

11 Recommendations

11.1 The Cabinet is asked to:

- 1. Approve the third tranche of actions as set out in this report.**

12 Background papers

12.1 [Norfolk County Council Climate Strategy](#)

12.2 [Cabinet Report, October 2023: Climate Action Plans Tranche 1](#) (p85 – p98)

12.3 [Cabinet Report, March 2024: Climate Action Plans Tranche 2](#) (p169 – p180)

Officer contact

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

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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.

Cabinet

Item No: 11

Report Title: Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain and Pollinator Action Plan

Date of Meeting: 08 April 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Eric Vardy (Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste)

Responsible Director: Grahame Bygrave, Lead Director of Infrastructure

Is this a Key Decision? No

Executive Summary / Introduction from Cabinet Member

The Environment Act 2021 sets out new legislation to require the production of new spatial strategies for nature recovery called Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Norfolk County Council is the 'Responsible Authority' for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Act also requires new development to mitigate any loss of biodiversity by creating a net increase of biodiversity created either within the development site or elsewhere, this is called Biodiversity Net Gain.

We are working in partnership with Suffolk County Council by virtue of shared designated areas of natural environment and landscape such as the Broads, Breckland and Coast, as well as shared stakeholders, to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategies by Summer 2025.

The Strategy will set out the current state of key nature in the county as well as prioritise areas that have potential for nature recovery. The Strategy will be used to guide developers or providers of Biodiversity Net Gain to those priority places. Together the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the statutory delivery tool of Biodiversity Net Gain, along with other tools will create Norfolk's contribution to a National Nature Recovery Network. Our Pollinator Action Plan is one way in which the County Council can support and promote biodiversity in the county contributing to nature recovery.

The proposals in this report today will help us to achieve key outcomes for the Council's Climate Strategy and the County Council's key priorities by increasing

biodiversity and helping the environment be more resilient to climate change for the benefit of wildlife, people, and the economy.

Recommendations:

- 1. Agree with the timescale to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy**
- 2. Agree Norfolk County Council's role as a Responsible Authority for Biodiversity Net Gain**
- 3. Agree the role of Norfolk County Council in providing new habitat which can be counted as biodiversity net gain**
- 4. Approve the production of an environment strategy in 2024 that will outline potential for biodiversity net gain uplift as a matter of policy beyond the statutory minimum**
- 5. Agree the adoption of the Pollinator Action Plan by the Council**

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 The Environment Act 2021 sets out new legislation to require the production of new spatial strategies for nature recovery called Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Norfolk County Council is the 'Responsible Authority' for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Act also requires new development to mitigate any loss of biodiversity by creating a net increase of biodiversity created either within the development site or elsewhere, this is called Biodiversity Net Gain.

We are working in partnership with Suffolk County Council by virtue of shared designated areas of natural environment and landscape such as the Broads, Breckland and Coast, as well as shared stakeholders, to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategies by Summer 2025.

The Strategy will set out the current state of key nature in the county as well as prioritise areas that have potential for nature recovery. The Strategy will be used to guide developers or providers of Biodiversity Net Gain to those priority places. Together the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the statutory delivery tool of Biodiversity Net Gain, along with other financial tools will create Norfolk's contribution to a National Nature Recovery Network. Whilst Government is aiming for Local Nature Recovery Strategies to be completed by March 2025, due to two local elections and a general election we have factored in the pre-election periods which mean that our engagement activity would have to temporarily stopped. We have factored in this risk and have appropriate mitigation in place but as a result our Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be completed by late Summer 2025.

- 1.2 Biodiversity Net Gain is now required for major development and from April 2024 for minor developments and Nationally Significant Infrastructure from 2025. It requires any loss of biodiversity interest because of development, that cannot be avoided, be replaced including a statutory minimum of 10% increase. The intent is to see an overall increase in biodiversity because of development. Developers are responsible for creating the new biodiversity habitat(s) within the development site or if that isn't feasible, located elsewhere. Developers must ensure the new habitat is secured and managed for 30 years. If they need to create habitat off site, and cannot provide it themselves, they can buy Biodiversity Net Gain 'credits' that will pay a provider. Government has created habitat calculators to guide developers as to what is required. There are landowners and managers in Norfolk that are currently creating new habitats on their land e.g., Wendling Beck, which they will sell as Biodiversity Net Gain Credits. As a developer and planning authority, Norfolk County Council will need to consider Biodiversity Net Gain in our decision making and provide it for our own developments e.g., for roads, minerals, waste, schools.
- 1.3 Biodiversity Net Gain offers two opportunities for the County Council. Firstly, we could use our own property to sell Biodiversity Net Gain through the creation of new habitats. Given the cost of buying Biodiversity Net Gain credits this could be done at a profit. The credit prices range from £42,000 for lower tiered habitats, such as 'heathland and shrub', to £650,000 per hectare at the upper end for top tier peat lakes. The second opportunity is to apply for 'responsible body status', which would allow the County Council to enter into conservation covenant agreements with landowners. These are a new type of legal agreement which are one means by which developers will be able to show they have met their Biodiversity Net Gain obligations.

To apply, an organisation must be either a local authority, a public body or charity, "where at least some of its main purposes or functions relate to conservation", or a body other than a public body or charity, "where at least some of its main activities relate to conservation".

- 1.4 Our Pollinator Action Plan is one way in which the County Council can support and promote biodiversity in the county contributing to nature recovery. Healthy pollinators are critical to us both for food production and nature. One in every three mouths of food we eat needs pollination. Since then, our action plan has been peer reviewed by experts from across Europe and the UK to ensure it represents the best practice based on scientific evidence. The Pollinator Action Plan has six simple actions that we can take as the County Council and encourage others to take. We have a nature recovery working group from across the key services of the County Council to embed the action plan and its actions into what we do.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Jointly produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with Suffolk County Council aiming to publish in Summer 2025.
- 2.2 Consider applying as a Responsible Authority for Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 2.3 Consider the role of Norfolk County Council in providing new habitat on our property which can be counted as Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 2.4 Support the adoption of the Pollinator Action Plan by the County Council.

3. Impact of the Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal will have a positive impact on the quantity and quality of biodiversity within Norfolk.
- 3.2 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy will guide off site Biodiversity Net Gain provision to strategic locations.
- 3.3 The Pollinator Action Plan will result in increased number and diversity of pollinators throughout the county.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1 Both the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain are statutory requirements upon the County Council.
- 4.2 The Pollinator Action Plan has been developed using the best available scientific evidence and has been subject to further scrutiny from European experts. The Action Plan is based on sound science and can be implemented by the County Council on our own property holdings and other landowners and land managers.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 There is no alternative option for producing Local Nature Recovery Strategy or Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 5.2 There is no alternative for the Pollinator Action Plan that would result in the same outcomes.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Both the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain provisions are supported by Government through new burdens money. For Local Nature Recovery Strategy, it is £177,643 for 2023/24 and £155,000 (subject to receiving our grant letter confirmation from Defra) for 2024/25. For Biodiversity Net Gain it is £26,807 for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This will pay to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and enable us to establish new ways of working in the County Council to consider Biodiversity Net Gain provisions from developers and secure any onsite or off-site Biodiversity Net Gain to support our own developments. Through a co-operation agreement we will be recovering half our costs from Suffolk County Council to produce the joint work on developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- 6.2 The Pollinator Action Plan will be implemented through the advice of existing staff in the Environment Service, through suggested changes to current land management practices that may have a cost saving e.g., changing mowing regimes, or through seeking additional grants or agri-environment grant support.

7. Resource Implications

- 7.1 **Staff:** Within the Environment Service we have already recruited a team to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy including a shared Local Nature Recovery Strategy Manager with Suffolk County Council. We will be recruiting a Biodiversity Net Gain Officer for two years with the Specialist Advice Service to develop new ways of working and deliver advice to developers and our own Planning team.

7.2 **Property: None**

7.3 **IT: None**

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 **Legal Implications:** There will be legal implications of not delivering our statutory duties on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain.

8.2 **Human Rights Implications: None**

8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included): We will prepare an Equality Impact Assessment on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy once drafted in 2024.

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): We will complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy once we are clear on the type of personal information, we may need to hold to manage the engagement we need to carry out.

8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate): None

8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate): None

8.7 Any Other Implications: None

9. Risk Implications / Assessment

9.1 There are legal implications of not delivering against our statutory duties.

9.2 There are reputation implications if we do not comply with the Environment Act and any secondary legislation.

10. Select Committee Comments

10.1 Having reviewed and commented on the report, and in particular Norfolk County Council's role as a Responsible Authority for Biodiversity Net Gain and their role in providing new habitats which could be counted as biodiversity net gain, the Select Committee RESOLVED to:

1. Note the timescale to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
2. Note that an environment strategy will be produced in 2024 that may outline potential for biodiversity net gain uplift as a matter of policy beyond the statutory minimum
3. Support the adoption of the Pollinator Action Plan by the Council

11. Recommendations

1. Agree with the timescale to produce the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
2. Agree Norfolk County Council's role as a Responsible Authority for Biodiversity Net Gain

3. Agree the role of Norfolk County Council in providing new habitat which can be counted as biodiversity net gain
4. Approve the production of an environment strategy in 2024 that will outline potential for biodiversity net gain uplift as a matter of policy beyond the statutory minimum
5. Agree the adoption of the Pollinator Action Plan by the Council

12. Background Papers

12.1 Infrastructure and Development Select Committee minutes [PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT, WASTE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PANEL \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

12.2 Norfolk Pollinator Action Plan (Annex A)

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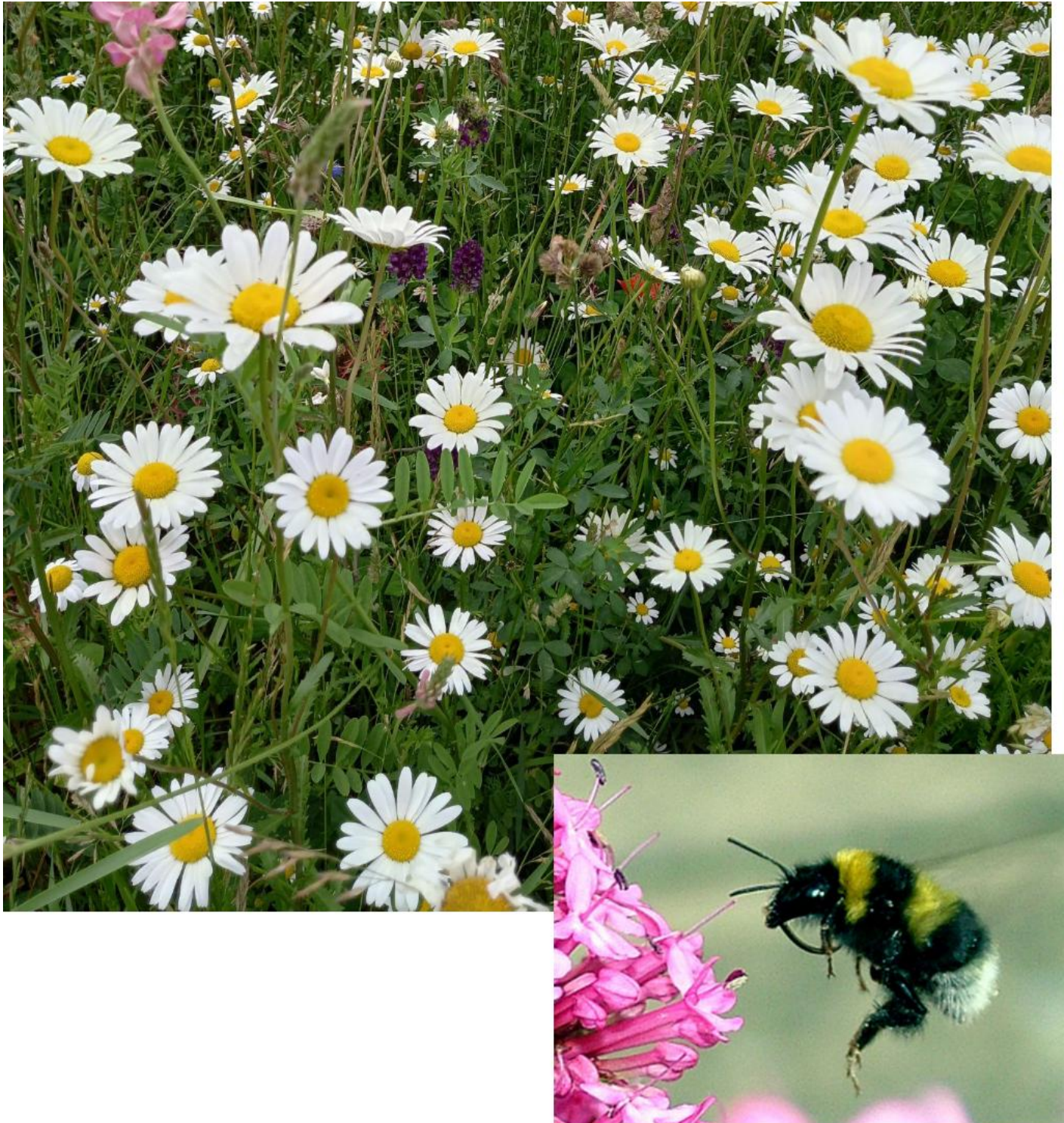
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Norfolk's Pollinator Action Plan

Protecting Norfolk's wildlife, economy and human health

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Norfolk's Pollinator Action Plan

Protecting Norfolk's wildlife, economy and human health

Foreword

Our wildlife is very much a part of our historic and cultural heritage, for instance names such as shepherd's purse, lady's smock, and Jack-by-the-hedge (plants), the red admiral, and the painted lady (butterflies), have been passed down the generations, and names familiar to our grandparents will most likely be just as familiar to our grandchildren.

Norfolk is a county blessed with an abundance of beautiful countryside and a long agricultural history, shaping the place as we know it today, and sustaining the county's rich heritage, economic success, and its natural environment. Our countryside is facing significant challenges with increasing demands on the land, climate change, and biodiversity loss including pollinating insects.

Norfolk County Council has committed to develop a Norfolk Pollinator Action Plan as a key element of its adopted Environmental Policy and in response to the National Pollinator Strategy. This will address and deliver the five key areas highlighted in the National Strategy, to ensure the protection and enhancement of pollinators on our County Farms and roadside verges, two areas which are under direct control of the Council. The Plan also makes recommendations to inspire wider action for pollinators across Norfolk and we hope it will encourage landowners, farmers, parish councils, community groups, businesses and individuals to help bring benefits for pollinators and their habitats at a variety of scales.

Councillor Eric Vardy, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
Norfolk County Council

Date adopted: **to be confirmed**



Top row: comma butterfly, bee, hoverfly (Leucozona), flowery ley. Bottom row: urban wildspace, bumblebee and beetles on flag iris, peacock butterfly, arable margin,)

This document has two parts;

Part 1 introduces the background to the Norfolk Pollinator Action Plan and what it will achieve,

Part 2 lists the actions that Norfolk County Council (NCC) will take across its various functions and services, and actions that will inspire others to do more for pollinators across Norfolk.



Wildflower meadow (Sarah Chittenden)

Part 1: Background

1. Introduction and overview

The purpose of this Pollinator Action Plan is to highlight the issues facing our pollinators, and to provide key objectives and actions for their long-term protection and enhancement, in line with the National Pollinator Strategy, Pollinator Action Plan 2021 to 2024 (May 2022), and to help underpin the environmental, social, and economic welfare of Norfolk.

The Plan emerged out of the County Council's Climate Change motion in 2019 which led to the identification of a cabinet member responsible for the environment who will help drive the Pollinator Action Plan forward.

Climate change, habitat loss and intensive agricultural practices pose real and significant challenges for pollinators, and our own well-being. Our action plan seeks to address these challenges, and to implement effective and sustainable solutions.

2. What is a pollinator?

A pollinator is an animal that transports pollen from the male part of a flowering plant to the female part of a flowering plant so that it can be fertilised and go on to produce new plants, seeds, nuts, and fruit. The most common types of pollinators in England are insects, such as bees, butterflies, and wasps. These little creatures play an essential role in the reproduction of many plants. In fact, more than 80% of the UK's wildflowers need animals to pollinate.

3. Why are pollinators so important?

As well as being important for their own sake, pollinators are essential for the maintenance of healthy functioning ecosystems. They are also vital in underpinning human health and well-being, and the economy. For example, they play a key role in maintaining the yields of a number of our economically important crops (Jackson, 2019) and one in every three mouthfuls of our food eaten in Europe depends on pollination taking place (Juniper, 2015). And in the UK, it is estimated that pollinators contribute £960 million each year to the economy (Zulian et al., 2013). In addition, Oil Seed Rape has a 25% dependency on pollination (Vanbergen et al., 2014) and the economic value of insect-pollinated production of Oil Seed Rape in the East of England is £88M or 17.2% of total crop production (Breeze et al., 2012). The cost of replacing UK bee pollination services each year has been calculated as £1.8 billion (Juniper, 2015).

Without these insect pollinators we wouldn't have many of our common fruit and vegetables like apples, strawberries, and tomatoes. Our diet would also be missing chocolate, coffee, and peanuts! And we wouldn't be wearing clothes made from cotton. Our world would also be a lot less colourful if we didn't have flowers in our countryside and urban areas, and in our gardens.

4. What do pollinators need?

When it comes to pollinators, one size does not always fit all. They need a variety of different habitat types for food, nesting, egg-laying, and hibernation (Senapathi et al., 2017). For example, patches of long grass make great nesting sites for bumblebees, and dead wood can make ideal hibernation sites for certain types of butterfly (read more in [Buglife's introduction to pollinator habitats](#)).

Timing is also important, as many pollinator species are active between March and October, so having flowering plants during these months is important. Night scented plants such as honeysuckle and white campion will help to attract moths (read more in this [RSPB guide](#)).

In addition, habitat connectivity enables species including pollinating species to move more easily through the landscape in search of key resources such as food and nesting sites.

The charity [Buglife](#) has championed 'B-Lines', or "*insect super-highways*", which are made up of a series of flower-rich habitats that provide important stepping stones between key local sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and County Wildlife Sites (CWS) throughout the landscape (Buglife 2023). "*...B-Lines can help to identify where important wildflower networks exist within the landscape*" (Buglife 2023). These so-called B-Lines can provide local authorities with an easy way of mapping such linear landscape features within its administrative boundary, as well as helping to meet national objectives including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), as set out in the Environment Act 2021, and the National Pollinator Strategy (Buglife 2023). They can also help in the delivery of locally important objectives and projects, such as [Local Nature Recovery Networks](#) (LNRS), and Green Infrastructure as part of new development (Buglife 2023).

5. Why do we need a Pollinator Action Plan for Norfolk?

Our pollinators need our help. Research shows that many of our pollinators are in trouble. For instance, here in Norfolk 23 bee species are now believed extinct (Owens, 2017) and in East Anglia as a whole, a further 25 bee species are considered 'threatened' and 31 species listed as being of 'conservation concern' (Jackson, 2019). And a similar picture can be seen in our butterflies. In Norfolk, the iconic swallowtail butterfly has declined in 56% of the areas monitored between 1976 and 2014 (Butterfly Conservation, 2015). Nationally, over 76% of the UK's butterflies have declined over the last four decades (Butterfly Conservation, 2015).

Evidence suggests that a number of factors have contributed to the decline in pollinator species, including:

- Common farming practices, such as intensive agriculture
- Herbicides and pesticides
- Habitat loss – land transformation into agricultural use
- Loss of native plant species
- Intensively farmed bees out-competing native wild bee species
- Climate change
- Extreme weather events – wildfires, floods, and droughts.

This has resulted in big losses of natural and semi-natural habitats rich in wildflowers. Hedges, traditional orchards and meadows have been lost, and habitats suitable for pollinators have become fragmented and isolated. These factors, particularly when combined can have a negative knock-on effect for other species that rely on pollinators, most notably plants, due to their symbiotic relationships, as insects pollinate our wild and garden flowers, which provide a crucial food source for a host of other wildlife such as birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles, thus affecting the wider biodiversity of habitats and ecosystems.

But together we can prevent further declines of our pollinators through the implementation of the Pollinator Action Plan.

6. What does the Plan seek to achieve?

The Action Plan includes actions that will be taken by Norfolk County Council across our various functions and services. It requires commitment and support across the Council, from members, officers, and our contractors. This Action Plan will allow us to:

- Manage County Council assets and operations to ensure that they are more pollinator friendly
- Ensure that the needs of pollinators are recognised and are taken into account across the County Council's functions, services, and responsibilities
- Manage the County Farm estate in a way that brings pollinator improvements and provides a model that can be replicated by other landowners across Norfolk.

The Action Plan also includes actions to inspire others (outside NCC) to do more for pollinators across Norfolk. This includes increasing awareness of the needs of pollinators and the collection of data to support actions to benefit pollinators and their habitats. It will be used to support landowners, farmers, parish councils, community groups, businesses and individuals to help bring benefits to pollinators and their habitats at a variety of scales.

7. The key objectives of the Pollinator Action Plan

There are a number of key objectives within the Plan, which seek to:

- Raise the awareness and importance of pollinators throughout Norfolk
- Promote, support and encourage pollinator-friendly farming
- Promote, support and encourage pollinator-friendly management of the county's highway verges, and Public Rights of Way (PRoW)
- Manage other county council assets for the benefit of pollinators
- Encourage the protection and enhancement of the Norfolk's pollinators through the planning system
- Establish baseline data for Norfolk's pollinators and their habitats
- Monitor action for pollinators

8. The wider environmental context

In addition, this Action Plan will not only help our pollinators, but will also help to deliver other important environmental objectives both locally and nationally, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

BNG can enable pollinating insects to restore and increase their populations through the creation of new habitats, and the connectivity of existing ones (Natural England 2022). Linear landscape features such as hedgerows and roadside verges can help to connect habitats, thus reducing habitat connectivity and enabling insects greater access to resources such as food, which in turn enables plant pollination (Mueller 2021).

9. Who is the Plan for?

The Pollinator Action Plan for Norfolk is for:

- County Farms;
- Highways (roadside verges and Public Rights of Way);
- Other Norfolk County Council assets and services (e.g. schools and waste facilities).

Additionally, the Plan sets out actions that will inspire others outside NCC to do more for pollinators across Norfolk.

10. Building on success

We want to continue our success throughout the lifetime of the Action Plan by:

- Maximising the pollinating potential of the County Council's own land and property, such as county farms, Highways, and schools.
- Ensuring more, bigger, better, joined-up, diverse and high-quality flower-rich habitats (including nesting places and shelter), supporting our pollinators across the country.
- Ensuring that pollinator populations are healthy and more resilient to climate change and severe weather events, and which can support our agriculture and tourist economies.
- Preventing further extinctions of known threatened pollinating species.
- Enhanced awareness across a wide range of businesses, other organisations and the public of the essential needs of pollinators
- Monitoring actions taken to support pollinators

11. Partnership-working for Pollinators

- Internal NCC partners; links will be key with Highways, NCC Property Services, County Farms.
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) including links with the '[Living Landscapes](#)' initiative, ecological networks and [Roadside Nature Reserves](#) (RNRs) project
- RSPB – potential links with the '[Futurescapes](#)' project
- Buglife [B-Lines](#) project
- Academic links: e.g. [UEA research group on pollinators](#); Research group at John Innes Centre; Agri-ecology group.
- Large estates in Norfolk
- 'Re-wilding' projects in Norfolk
- Local Planning Authorities
- Potential links with Defra
- [Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group](#) (FWAG).

12. How we can all help our pollinators?

We can create opportunities for pollinators in urban as well as rural areas. With increasingly high urban population levels, adequate provision for access to natural and semi-natural green spaces becomes increasingly important for people and pollinators alike. In Harley Sherlock's 1991 book entitled *Cities are good for us*, the author argued that "every city needs some wilderness" (Sherlock 1991, p156). Plants and insects can help to achieve this aim, which of course can be extended to our towns, villages, and our countryside.

“The wildlife that thrives in [urban areas] is recognized as playing a vital role in the quality of life of the people who live in [them]” (Mabey 1999). Parks, gardens, (public and private), squares, churchyards and cemeteries can all help to sustain a diversity of plant and insect life (Goode 2014). In addition, nature reserves in urban areas have become more common, and are often created through the passion and dedication of local communities (Goode 2014). Brownfield sites are particularly beneficial for nectar-rich plants, which in turn attract invertebrates, due to the lack of management of these types of sites, some of which have been left undisturbed for years, enabling pioneer habitats to take root, quite literally! Such places provide opportunities for access to nature for urban residents, as well as contributing to a network of greenspaces for pollinating insects and associated plants. Wildlife, and wild plants can help to remove the barrier both real and imagined, between our towns and countryside. Moreover, wildflowers wherever you may chance upon them form part of the rich and varied landscapes of the built and natural environment (Mabey 1999). Frequently disturbed ground in our towns and cities that is used and re-used for different purposes, provides ideal conditions and opportunities for flowers to germinate. (Mabey 1999). For example, sites that have been left un-used for some time, such as brownfield sites, can be colonised relatively quickly by wild plants and insects, some of which can be particularly rare (Goode 2014).

13. Top tips for helping pollinators

Here are five top tips for helping pollinators:

i. Create homes for pollinators:

Without safe places to rest, nest, and over-winter, pollinators cannot survive. Undisturbed log piles, leaf litter, twig bundles and compost heaps make great homes for pollinators. You could try making a bug hotel.

ii. Plant for pollinators:

Try to provide flowers throughout the year from early spring to early winter. Plant native species like foxgloves, ivy, and local wildflower mixes. Many wildflowers are naturally drought-tolerant and require less watering than other plants. Some cultivated garden plants that have been demonstrated to be particularly visited by foraging include buddleja, borage, common marigold, lavender, ox-eye daisy, comfrey (Baldock et al, 2019) and sunflowers.

iii. Be less tidy:

“...weeds are the very stuff of life for insects”. (Mabey 2012, p192). Naturally messy places with nettles, brambles and undisturbed rough grasses are vital for both food and shelter for pollinators and other invertebrates. Instead of 'tidying up', leave seed heads and fallen leaves *in situ*.

iv. Mow less:

Reduce the frequency of mowing and leave areas of grass uncut. This will allow wild plants such as dandelion, hawk-bits and clovers to flower, providing another source of nectar.

v. Ditch the chemicals:

Avoid using weed killers, aphid killers, slug pellets or other pesticides. These products reduce the amount of food and homes available for pollinators and other useful invertebrates and can harm the environment in other ways. Instead go for natural alternatives, which are free! For example, use crushed eggshells, or better still, encourage hedgehogs, as slugs are one of their favourite foods!

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Part 2: The Actions

- Internal actions for the County Council are themes 1- 4 (highlighted in orange)
- Wider actions are Themes 5-7 (highlighted in green)
- Timescale to establish: Short (in 2024); Medium (by 2025); Long (after 2025)

Theme 1. Raising awareness of the needs of pollinators within the Council (internal action for NCC)

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
1.1	Work with elected members and colleagues to develop, support and promote pollinator friendly practices.	Messaging for Councillors / officers, to enable them to promote NCC actions for pollinators. NCC pollinator events and awareness-raising.	Track messaging / updates created and events supported	Officer time required	CES Environment Team	Members and officers from relevant departments. Media Team	Short
1.2	Establish a mechanism to ensure cross-directorate delivery of the action plan.	Internal officer group on nature recovery. Identify the most effective ways to influence pollinator-friendly practices at NCC.	Production of corporate protocols for considering pollinators	Officer time required, Member time.	CES Environment Team, NCC ecologists	Members and officers from relevant departments. Media Team	Short (with 4 meetings held each year)
1.3	Ensure the needs of pollinators are embedded within all NCC strategic and partnership plans, policies, projects and operations, such as the NCC Biodiversity Net Gain Policy; the Ash Die-back project , the Highway Verges project , the NCC Climate Change Policy and infrastructure projects such as road schemes.	Internal review of policies and management operations	Set up review programme. Progress monitored	Officer time required	CES Environment Team, NCC ecologists	Members Academics, infrastructure teams, other NCC teams as appropriate	Medium

Theme 2. Managing County Farms in a more pollinator-friendly way (internal action for NCC)

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
2.1	Identify and promote pollinator-friendly measures/ schemes/ training to County Farms Service and tenants	Develop County Farm champions / stakeholder group and social learning to develop interaction on pollinators and identify training needs. Set up meetings with County Farm tenants to identify groups with similar needs or outlook to enable tailored approaches (co-creation) Develop and roll-out a list of positive actions to benefit pollinators for farmers, and encourage self-monitoring. General awareness programme.	Track meetings established and training identified. Track NCC support of pollinator events and projects.	Officer time required Funding for training and events required. All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan	Corporate Property Team (County Farms) CES Environment Team	County Farm tenants, NCC land agents, Norfolk FWAG, NCC ecologists	Medium
2.2	Encourage all tenants to commit to pollinator-friendly farming.	Develop specific pollinator clauses within new County Farm tenancy agreements. Include a requirement to commit to farming in a pollinator-friendly in the selection process for prospective tenants. Provide financial incentives such as concessionary rents, lease extension for organic tenancies, grant incentives. Provide bespoke advice.	Track development of new tenancy agreement and incentives.	County Farm tenancy agreement. Resourcing for incentives would be required.	Corporate Property Team (County Farms) CES Environment Team		Medium

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
2.3	Establish a pilot/testing of pollinator-friendly measures on County Farms that could be adopted by others across Norfolk.	<p>Working with academic partners to produce scientifically-robust experiments to test a number of pollinator measures. These practices, once tested could be adopted by others.</p> <p>Local adoption of the monitoring measures used in the National Pollinator Monitoring Strategy (POMS).</p> <p>Establish a baseline for percentage of County Farm assets currently managed for pollinators or in management that benefit pollinators.</p>	<p>Local monitoring using a national standard to establish trends. Monitor change in the % of County Farm assets managed for pollinators</p>	<p>Officer time. External funding support may be required for trials/analysis of samples.</p> <p>Academic literature such as Potts et al., 2016</p>	NCC ecologists.	UEA researchers, County Farm tenants, NCC Land agents, Norfolk FWAG.	Medium

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
2.4	Phase out pesticide use on County Farms over the longer term.	<p>Work with external land agents and farming estates to share methods to reduce pesticide use across the county.</p> <p>Follow the principles of the adopted NCC Glyphosate Policy to protect pollinators and other biodiversity.</p> <p>Access resources that identify the impacts of pesticides on pollinator species, and how these could be phased out over the longer term.</p> <p>Incentivise voluntary reporting of annual pesticide use on County Farms to produce pesticide inventory. Provide information and training to encourage targeted pesticide use, and integrated pest management.</p> <p>Establish Pollinator Champions amongst County Farm tenants.</p>	<p>Monitor uptake of voluntary recording of pesticide use.</p> <p>Monitor glyphosate usage.</p>	<p>Integrated Weed Management approach (NCC Glyphosate Policy) to minimise glyphosate use</p> <p>Working with external land agents and farming estates to share specifications and reduce pesticide use</p>	Corporate Property Team (County Farms) / CES Environment Team	NCC Land Agents, County Farm tenants, Norfolk FWAG	Short/ Medium

Theme 3. Managing Highways verges and Public Right of Ways in a pollinator-friendly way (internal action for NCC)

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
3.1	Maintenance of the road verges to deliver their potential for pollinators with appropriate consideration of safety issues	Task and finish group of NCC Highways with CES Environment Team to review/revise current maintenance programmes. Promote the benefits of new approaches to manage highway verges better for pollinators. Take advantage of opportunities arising through the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Encourage district and parish councils with delegated authority for the management of verges to adopt pollinator friendly measures.	Monitor miles of verge managed more sympathetically for pollinators (from an agreed baseline) Include advice to support pollinators in the Highways Corridor document	Officer time Buglife report on road verges and their potential for pollinators All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan https://pollinators.ie/	NCC Highways with Community and Environmental Services (CES) Environment Team	CES Environment, Highways contractor, NCC media team, district and parish councils	Short/ medium
3.2	Maintenance of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) to deliver their potential for pollinators	Task and finish group of Countryside Access Officers and County Ecologist to review current maintenance programmes. Take advantage of opportunities arising through the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Consider projects for pollinators to be included in the Norfolk Access Improvement Plan or by Pathmakers .	Monitor pollinators projects included in the NAIP and/ or brought forward by Pathmakers. Consider recording all new positive outcomes to favour pollinators on the ProW over targets.	Officer time. Input from NLAF . All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan Norfolk Access Improvement Plan NCC TAMP	Highways Countryside Access Officers	CES Environment Team, contractors, Norfolk Local Access Forum	Short/ medium

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
3.3	Maintenance of Norfolk Trails and Norfolk Greenways to deliver their potential for pollinators	Task and finish group of NCC officers and ecologists. Develop a <i>Management for Pollinators</i> section in the Trails Management Handbook Use a variety of communication techniques to engage with people to explain new approaches to favour pollinators.	Inclusion of a <i>Management for Pollinators</i> section in the Norfolk Trails Management handbook	Officer time. Input from NLAF . All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan Norfolk Access Improvement Plan NCC TAMP	Norfolk Trails Team, Norfolk Greenways Team	CES Environment Team, contractors Norfolk Local Access Forum	Short/medium
3.4	Working with Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) to manage, promote and extend the Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR) scheme, designating the most important verges for Norfolk's special biodiversity	Secure budget to manage and promote existing RNRs. Establish a condition monitoring programme for RNRs. Identify new potential RNRs, surveying and marking with standard RNR posts/signs. Ensure important verges are designated as RNRs. Take advantage of opportunities arising through the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Use a variety of communication techniques to engage with people as new approaches are taken to manage highway verges) better for pollinators	Secure funds to manage and extend the RNR network. Increase the number of RNRs created. Monitor condition of RNRs.	Officer time NWT officer time. Funding required to manage and expand the network NWT Roadside Nature Reserve Scheme	CES Environment Team	Norfolk Wildlife Trust, NCC Highways, Corporate Media Team	Short/medium

Theme 4. Managing other NCC assets in a pollinator-friendly way (internal action for NCC)

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
4.1	Manage NCC assets such as the County Hall estate, school grounds, closed landfill sites to maximise opportunities for pollinators.	<p>Develop and deliver training / seminars and online guidance for Highways Designers, Closed Landfill Team and contractors working for NCC to promote pollinator best practice.</p> <p>Minimise use of pesticides as required by the NCC Glyphosate Policy.</p> <p>Include actions for pollinators in the County Hall estate management plan.</p> <p>Take advantage of opportunities to create habitat for pollinators through Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).</p> <p>Take advantage of opportunities arising through the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).</p>	<p>Track attendance of officers at events / seminars.</p> <p>Track adoption of pollinator friendly management actions on the County Hall Estate</p>	<p>Officer time.</p> <p>Funding to produce guidance.</p> <p>NCC Glyphosate Policy</p> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain regulations</p> <p>Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy</p>	<p>NCC ecologists</p> <p>Corporate Property Team</p>	<p>Highway designers, Close Landfill Team, Corporate property Team, Contractors</p>	Short

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
4.2	Ensure pollinator friendly practices are embedded into maintenance works, training, lease agreements and contracts.	<p>Develop criteria for impacts on pollinators against which to assess policies, projects, operations and schemes.</p> <p>All non-routine works to be assessed for their potential impact on pollinators/ habitats prior to work commencing to ensure no net loss.</p> <p>Include pollinators on the Environmental check lists for small highways schemes.</p> <p>Corporate Property Team, NCC Waste and Children's Services Team and Highways to review / revise current practices. Adopt an Integrated Weed Management Approach to minimise use of pesticides.</p>	Track policies, projects and operations where criteria are used. Track number of Highways environmental checklists where specific actions are taken for pollinators	<p>Officer time. NCC Glyphosate Policy</p> <p>Highways Environmental checklists (green forms)</p>	NCC ecologists	<p>Highways design officers.</p> <p>Highways, NORSE</p>	Short

Theme 5: Establishing the baseline data of pollinators and their habitats within Norfolk (wider actions in partnership)

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
5.1	Mapping Important Pollinator Areas (IPAs) in Norfolk.	Working with Buglife to devise concept and scope of IPAs, supported by a stakeholder group including species specialists, such as county records of bees, hoverflies and butterflies. The mapping will be undertaken by Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) incorporating Buglife's important invertebrate areas and updated, full-resolution B-lines. Deliver presentations about IPAs at conferences and seminars. Include data in commercial data searches requested by consultants and researchers. .	Track number of data searches where IPA data is included Track number of ecological reports which refer to Norfolk's IPAs and Norfolk B-lines	Officer time Volunteer Time Funding needed.	Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS)	County Recorders, Buglife Specialist recording groups such as the Norfolk Flora Group and Norfolk branch of Butterfly conservation. Academics, Natural England	Medium/Long
5.2	Identifying and promoting increased connectivity for pollinators across Norfolk	Develop and promote the ecological network mapping, incorporating the IPAs and B-Lines. Include information in local Biodiversity Net Gain strategies. Work with Natural England and Norfolk FWAG to influence Agri-Environment schemes. Work with NWT on Living Landscapes, County Wildlife Sites and landowners on re-wilding projects. Link to implementation of LNRS	Track projects and ecological reports which refer to Norfolk's IPA and B-Lines. Record number of presentations given.	Officer time, Volunteer specialists and NGOs	NBIS	Landowners, NWT, Norfolk FWAG, Natural England, Nature Reserve Managers.	Medium/Long

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
5.3	Establish a baseline of pollinator abundance for Norfolk. .	Develop a network of pollinator monitoring stations to establish a baseline of pollinator abundance using the methodology from the National Pollinator Monitoring Strategy (POMS), adding to Norfolk's Species Surveillance Network. Train volunteers and wardens of reserves to undertake monitoring.	Track number of POMS recording stations established in Norfolk. Track number of volunteer hours monitoring pollinators through POMS in Norfolk	Officer time Volunteer time Funding needed UEA pollinator research group	NBIS	Volunteers, Nature Reserve managers and staff	Medium/ Long

Theme 6: Raise awareness to support pollinator-friendly practices throughout Norfolk (wider actions in partnership)

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
6.1	Create a Pledge for Pollinators' web page and other non-financial incentives.	This would take the form of a form of a webpage for organisations, individuals, business, schools, community groups parish councils, farmers, and conservation bodies who would pledge to manage land for pollinators. Other incentives could involve awards and recognition, equipment, gifts of seeds, shrubs and trees.	Track number of organisations and individual making a pledge for pollinators. Track area of land that has been pledged. Track success of other incentives	Officer time. Funding to develop web page. Funding for a pledge pack and promotional materials, posters, social media, videos etc. The All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan provides good examples	NBIS	NCC Ecologist, community groups, parish councils	Medium/ Long
6.2	A schools / young people scheme potentially in partnership with other organisations to promote better understanding of our pollinators	Schools / young people projects to be worked up, promoting a better understanding of pollinators. Competitions for best projects for example.	Develop targets to monitor success.	The All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan includes examples	Officer time Potential need for funding.	CES Environment Team, county ecologists	Medium/ Long

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
6.3	Promote a better understanding of our pollinators with the general public.	<p>Promoting the value of pollinators and their needs to a variety of audiences and across a range of media including:</p> <p>Highlighting the importance of pollinators in Norfolk; advice on how the public can help; promotion of activities as part of National Bee Needs Week.</p> <p>Delivery of natural history workshops on identifying important pollinators including a potential 'Bioblitz' event on a County Farm.</p> <p>Delivery of seminars on actions that can be undertaken to important areas for pollinators aimed at individuals, community groups.</p> <p>Messaging around the importance of preventing habitat degradation and around pollinators' needs, including nesting and hibernation habitat as well as nectar/ pollen sources.</p>	<p>Track number of articles and social media posts</p> <p>Track number of people attending seminars and training events.</p> <p>Track number of people attending natural history workshops</p>	<p>Officer time, Volunteers.</p> <p>CEH's Pollinator Monitoring Scheme</p> <p>Flower-Insect timed counts (FIT counts) or 1km squares.</p> <p>UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme</p>	NCC ecologists, NBIS.	Corporate Media Team; County Recorders, NWT, Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society	Medium/ long
6.4	Promoting and advising landowners and farmers about pollinator-friendly practices	Expert-led farm walks and seminars for landowners; seminar(s); production of web-based guidance and/or leaflets; working with academic partners and landowners to identify ways to improve the farmed landscape for pollinators in a Norfolk-specific context and produce/commission guidance.	Develop and monitor targets such as changes in land management to favour pollinators, and guidance produced.	Funding required The All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan includes examples	Norfolk FWAG. Developed with others such as , UEA, NWT, Broads Authority, district councils.	NCC ecologists	Short/ Medium

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
		Opportunities arising through the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) .		Advice from B-lines (Buglife)			
6.5	Develop actions for areas such as churchyards, village greens, community-owned land, amenity land e.g. as managed by parish/town councils and the borough/district authorities.	Produce / promote web-based guidance and/or leaflets with Local groups, e.g. Friends' groups around Norfolk	Develop and monitor targets such as changes in land management to favour pollinators, and guidance produced.	NWT Churchyard conservation scheme Caring for God's Acre	NWT	NCC ecologists	Medium/ long

Theme 7: Pollinators and the planning system in Norfolk (wider actions in partnership)

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/ required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
7.1	Review existing local plans and planning policy to assess if they provide suitable measures for pollinators	Identify if current and emerging site allocations that contain habitats which support pollinators or could do so, such as brownfield sites are recognised. Highlight allocations where action for pollinators would be necessary. Take advantage of opportunities arising through the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).	Record allocations where advice on action for pollinators has been provided	Officer time. National Planning Policy Framework National Pollinator Strategy	NCC ecologists.	NCC and District and Borough planning authorities	Medium
7.2	Encourage and work with district/borough authorities to include specific actions for pollinators in their local plans.	Promote the needs of pollinators, ecology network mapping and B-Lines for use in site allocations for emerging local plans. Encourage each district/borough to nominate a planning officer as an eco advocate to support their colleagues. Take advantage of opportunities arising through the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).	Track referencing in new and emerging local plans to pollinators and the Biodiversity Net Gain strategy for Norfolk.	Officer time Duties under the National Planning Policy Framework National Pollinator Strategy	NCC ecologists	District and Borough planning authorities	Medium
7.3	Ensure that pollinators are given a high priority in the emerging <i>Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) strategy for Norfolk</i> and other strategic plans relating to the Natural Environment such as the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).	Through advocacy, ensure that pollinators are given a high priority in the emerging BNG strategy for Norfolk and the Norfolk LNRS. Include detailed, relevant actions for pollinators.	Track biodiversity (including pollinators) loss-gain over time	Norfolk and Suffolk Compendium of Natural Assets . Greater Norwich	NCC ecologists	NBIS, NCC and District and Borough planning authorities	Medium/ Long

	Description	How this will be achieved?	Measures of progress	Resources available/required	Lead	Partners	Timescale
				Green Infrastructure Strategy			
7.4	Provide training for planning officers on the need for and benefits of actions for pollinators and encourage each district/borough to nominate a planning officer as an 'eco-advocate' to support their colleagues.	Promote the Norfolk Pollinator Action Plan at the annual Planning and Biodiversity Seminar (held annually). Provide training on BNG and Defra metric to planning officers. Where NCC has a Service Level Agreement with district authorities, include a section on pollinators in ecology training for planners. Include a section on pollinators in ecology training for the NCC Planning Committee	Track number of events and training on pollinators	Officer time Online guidance and resources for local authorities e.g. Buglife	NCC ecologists	NBIS, SBIS, and local planning authorities	Medium/ Long

Cabinet

Item No: 12

Report Title: Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and Investigatory Powers Act 2016 Annual Report

Date of Meeting: 08 April 2024

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

Responsible Director: Ceri Sumner (Chief Fire Officer)

Is this a Key Decision? No

If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions:

Executive Summary / Introduction from Cabinet Member

Since 2010, members have received regular reports of the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and approved the Council's policy and guidance. Since 2020 this report has also covered the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) and there have been separate policies for each piece of legislation. Although the legislation is currently only used by Trading Standards, the policies are corporate policies, applicable to the Council as a whole. Compliance with the legislation ensures that the Council's use of investigatory powers is in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998.

In August 2023 a "paper" inspection of the Council's use of the legislation was undertaken by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Officer (IPCO). In a letter from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner to the Chief Executive dated 24 August 2023 he states "I am satisfied that your reply provides your assurance that ongoing compliance with RIPA 2000 and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 will be maintained. As such, your Council will not require further inspection this year."

This report details the use of RIPA and the IPA by the Council in 2023 and seeks approval of the current policies, which have been reviewed and slightly amended.

Recommendations:

1. To note the use of RIPA and the IPA by the Council in 2023, as set out in Appendix A; and
2. To approve the revised policy documentation provided at Appendices B and C.

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 The current RIPA and IPA policies and guidance were first approved in 2020, replacing the RIPA policy and guidance first developed in 2010. Combined, they provide a framework to ensure the Council's use of investigatory techniques regulated by the legislation, directed surveillance, the use of covert human intelligence sources (CHIS) and the acquisition of communications data, is compliant with the law. The policies and guidance are reviewed and updated annually, taking account of current national guidance and good practice, and approved by members.

2. Proposal

2.1 Cabinet notes the use of RIPA and the IPA by the Council in 2023

A report setting out the use of the legislation by the Council is attached at Appendix A. The report gives the date, general purpose or reason for which authority was granted together with the grade of senior manager that granted the authority. It is not possible to give further details as this may breach confidentiality or legislation, offend the sub-judice rules, interfere with the proper investigation of potential offenders, or disclose other operational information which could hinder past, current or future activities, investigatory techniques or investigations.

In summary, the total number of authorisations granted in this period was as follows:

- Directed Surveillance: 1
- Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS): 0
- Acquisition of Communications Data: 0

It can be seen from the information in Appendix A that, across the whole of the Council, the only activities covered by the legislation were authorised in relation to Trading Standards' investigations.

2.2 Cabinet approves the revised policy documentation provided at Appendices B and C

These policies and guidance have been reviewed by nplaw and Trading Standards and minor changes have been made, to update links to external web pages and to remove an obsolete referral between paragraphs in the RIPA policy and guidance. Changes have also been made to add a Senior Fire

Officer to both lists of Authorising Officers. Changes are tracked for ease of reference.

In general, the policies refer the reader to the Home Office Codes of Practice for more detailed guidance in relation to specific issues. The two policies are cross referenced.

Consultation and user engagement has not been necessary.

3. Impact of the Proposal

- 3.1 The revised policies will help to ensure that the Council's use of investigatory powers remains compliant with the relevant legislation, including the Human Rights Act 1998 and that evidence gathered as a result of the use of these techniques is admissible under law in criminal prosecutions.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1 The two Acts, the associated Regulations and Codes of Practice set out expectations for local authorities in relation to the oversight of RIPA authorisations for directed surveillance and CHIS and for the acquisition of communications data under the IPA. The recommendations set out in this report meet the requirements of the legislation. There are no other reasonably viable options to the recommendations above.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 These corporate policies are considered to be the most effective way to ensure the Council fulfils its legal responsibilities, when using covert investigatory techniques to gather intelligence for the purposes of one of its regulatory functions.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. Resource Implications

- 7.1 **Staff:** No implications
- 7.2 **Property:** No impl
- 7.3 **IT:** N/A

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 **Legal Implications:** The legislation sets out the expectations for local authorities in relation to covert surveillance and the acquisition of communications data.
- 8.2 **Human Rights Implications:** The legislation ensures that, in conducting surveillance, public authorities have regard to the Human Rights Act 1998 and to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the ECHR) – the right to a private and family life.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): The Equality Act 2010 requires decision makers to give due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when determining this proposal. This includes considering the impact of the proposal on people with protected characteristics.

Monitoring of the use of investigatory techniques, directed surveillance, covert human intelligence sources (CHIS) and the acquisition of communications data, has provided reassurance that people with protected characteristics are not over or under-represented in service outcomes. This means that people who share a particular protected characteristic are not inadvertently or unfairly the focus of service activities.

- 8.4 **Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):** Investigators routinely obtain, store, and share information during investigations. Some of this information is personal data, and some of it is confidential or sensitive. The information is securely stored electronically, on the County Council's Network, and in other ways such as on secure databases and in secure paper files. The information is stored and processed in accordance with the law (including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Enterprise Act 2002) and with proper regard to the Council's privacy notices. The RIPA policy and guidance has previously been amended to make it clear that responsibility for the handling, storage, review and destruction of any information product obtained through directed surveillance lies with the authorising officer.

Discussions have taken place with the Information Governance Team who advise that a Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required, as there is no new processing and the relevant privacy notices relating to regulatory provision are in place and have been recently reviewed.

- 8.5 **Any Other Implications:** Officers have considered all the implications which members should be aware of. Apart from those listed in the report (above), there are no other implications to take into account.

9. Risk Implications / Assessment

- 9.1 The proposed policies and guidance set out expectations for the Council's use of RIPA and the IPA. Compliance with the policies and guidance will help to ensure that the Council's use of investigatory powers remains compliant with the relevant legislation, including the Human Rights Act 1998.

10. Recommendations

1. To note the use of RIPA and the IPA by the Council in 2023, as set out in Appendix A; and
2. To approve the revised policy documentation provided at Appendices B and C.

11. Background Papers

- 12.1 The Council's current RIPA and IPA policy and guidance can be accessed on the intranet at:

<https://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/intranet/files/strategy-and-governance/documents/nplaw/ripa-policy.pdf>

and <https://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/intranet/files/strategy-and-governance/documents/nplaw/ipa-policy.pdf>.

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 A

RIPA AND IPA AUTHORISATIONS 2023

No.	Date	Nature of Authorisation	Reason for Authorisation	Grade of Authorising/ Senior Officer	Directorate
1.	04.08.23	Directed Surveillance	Underage sale of vapes/tobacco products	Section Manager (Shaun Norris)	CES



Directed Surveillance and the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

Policy and Guidance Notes

nplaw
Norfolk Public Law

Last Updated February 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The main purpose of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) is to ensure that public bodies use their investigatory powers in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998. The investigatory powers covered by the legislation are: -
 - (a) intrusive surveillance (on residential premises/in private vehicles) (NB: The Council is not permitted to engage in intrusive surveillance).
 - (b) covert surveillance in the course of specific operations.
 - (c) the use of covert human intelligence sources (agents, informants, undercover officers).
- 1.2 For each of these powers RIPA ensures that the law clearly covers the purposes for which they may be used, which authorities can use the powers, who should authorise each use of power, the use that can be made of the material gained, independent judicial oversight and a means of redress for any individual aggrieved by use of the powers.
- 1.3 In addition to the legislation itself, the Home Office has issued Codes of Practice dealing with covert surveillance and covert human intelligence sources. This guide is designed to cover the aspects of RIPA that regulate the use of investigatory powers by the Council.
- 1.4 Directed Surveillance can only be undertaken if it is for the purpose of preventing/detecting a criminal offence which is punishable (whether on summary conviction or on indictment) by a maximum term of **at least 6 months of imprisonment** - or would constitute an offence under sections 146, 147 or 147A of the Licensing Act 2003 or section 7 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (sale of tobacco and alcohol to underage children).

2. What is regulated by RIPA?

- 2.1 The monitoring, observing or listening to persons, their movements, their conversations or their other activities or communications where this is done in a manner calculated to ensure that the subject of surveillance is unaware that they are being monitored or observed etc.
- 2.2 The recording of anything monitored observed or listened to during surveillance.
- 2.3 Use of a surveillance device, e.g., a hidden video camera, a listening device.
- 2.4 See paragraph 19 below for further advice on activities/operations considered to involve directed surveillance.

3. What is not regulated by RIPA?

- 3.1 Local authorities are only able to seek authorisations under RIPA for covert surveillance carried out **for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime**. No RIPA authorisations can be sought for covert surveillance being undertaken for other purposes, nor should they be sought for crime prevention or detection purposes, if that purpose is not linked to one of the authority's regulatory functions. This was stated by the Investigatory Powers Tribunal in the case of *C v The Police and the Secretary of State for the Home Department* (14/11/2006, No: IPT/03/32/H), who held that surveillance of employees is unlikely to be for a regulatory function of the authority.
- 3.2 This means that there may be circumstances when the Local Authority wishes to carry out surveillance and will not be able to rely on a RIPA authorisation e.g., monitoring of social media (see s20 below) or surveillance of employees. Not being able to seek an authorisation under RIPA means there is a greater risk of a human rights challenge, as privacy rights under Article 8 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) are likely to be interfered with. This can be reduced by following a similar self-authorisation process, which can be achieved by using the non-RIPA authorisation form available from nplaw and/or Trading Standards and which should be completed by the officer and authorised by a person identified in Appendix A.
- 3.3 The Authorising Officer should consider the same issues as if he were responding to a request under RIPA, particularly the necessity of the operation, whether it is proportionate and whether there are any other methods of obtaining the information. If there is any doubt as to the issue of a Local Authority regulatory role and its ordinary functions, then advice should be sought from nplaw.
- 3.4 Directed surveillance does not include covert surveillance carried out by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances which, by their very nature, could not have been foreseen. Thus, a local authority officer would not require an authorisation to conceal himself and observe a suspicious person that he came across in the course of his duties.
- 3.5 Overt CCTV surveillance systems are not normally covered by RIPA as their use is obvious to the public. There may, however, be occasions where public authorities use material obtained from overt CCTV systems for the purpose of specific investigation or operation. In such cases authorisation for directed surveillance may be necessary.
- 3.6 The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 regulates investigatory actions in respect of the acquisition of communications data. This is therefore outside the scope of this guide and reference should be made to the Council's "Investigatory Powers Act 2016" guidance.
- 3.7 See paragraph 22 below for further advice on activities/operations considered **not** to involve directed surveillance.

4. Rules of Evidence

- 4.1 Material obtained through covert surveillance may be used as evidence in criminal proceedings. Provided that surveillance has been properly authorised, the evidence gathered should be admissible under law and in accordance with Section 78 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). Material gathered as a result of surveillance authorised under RIPA is subject to the ordinary rules for retention and disclosure of material and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA). See also s10 below.

5. Some Definitions

- 5.1 “Covert”: Concealed, done secretly
- 5.2 “Covert surveillance”: Surveillance which is carried out in a manner calculated to ensure that the person(s) subject to the surveillance are unaware that it is or may be taking place.
- 5.3 “Directed surveillance”: Surveillance which is covert, but not intrusive, and is undertaken for the purposes of a specific investigation or specific operation, in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about a person (whether or not one specifically identified for the purposes of the investigation or operation) and otherwise than by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances.
- 5.4 “Intrusive surveillance”: Is covert surveillance that is carried out in relation to anything taking place on any residential premises or in any private vehicle and involves the presence of an individual on the premises or in the vehicle or is carried out by means of a surveillance device.
- 5.5 “Private information”: Includes any information relating to a person’s private or family life. Private information should be taken generally to include any aspect of a person’s private or personal relationship with others, including family and professional or business relationships.
- 5.6 “Confidential Information”: Confidential information consists of communications subject to legal privilege, communications between a Member of Parliament and another person on constituency matters,

confidential personal information, or confidential journalistic material.

- 5.7 “Collateral Intrusion”: The risk of obtaining private information about persons who are not subjects of the surveillance.

6. **Entering onto or interfering with property, or with wireless telegraphy or postal communications**

- 6.1 Only members of the intelligence services are able to make applications to enter onto or interfere with property or with wireless telegraphy. Council staff are not permitted, under any circumstances, to engage in such activity.

- 6.2 It is an offence to intercept communications sent by public postal service and public telecommunication systems. Interception of communication can be done with lawful authority, however only a limited group can grant a warrant for such an activity (Secretary of State or his representative to such persons as the Directors-General of the Security Service and Director of GCHQ, the Chief of Secret Intelligence Service and the Chief Constables of Police). Therefore, it is not envisaged that the Local Authority would ever be permitted to make a lawful interception of a communication, via a warrant.

- 6.3 However, where a person who is intending to send or receive communications via a public telecommunication system, has given consent, both sides of the conversation can be listened to and/or recorded, if directed surveillance has been authorised for this purpose.

7. **Authorisations**

7.1 Purpose of Authorising surveillance

- 7.1.1 An authorisation under RIPA, with subsequent appropriate approval by a Justice of the Peace, provides lawful authority for a public authority to carry out surveillance. Responsibility for authorising surveillance investigations rests with an “authorising officer”. Approval is then required by a Justice of the Peace. Surveillance must not be carried out without prior authorisation and approval.

- 7.1.2 The consequence of not obtaining an authorisation and approval under RIPA may be that the action is in breach of the Human Rights Act/European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that any evidence so gained could be excluded in any proceedings that arise.

- 7.1.3 Authorisation should be obtained for any covert surveillance that is likely to interfere with a person’s rights to privacy under Article 8 ECHR by obtaining private information about that person, whether or not that person is the subject of the investigation or operation.

7.2 Basis for Authorising Surveillance Activities

- 7.2.1 Authorisation can only be granted where there is justifiable interference with an individual's human rights, i.e., it is necessary and proportionate for surveillance activities to take place.
- 7.2.2 The authorising officer must believe that the authorisation is necessary in the circumstances of the particular case for the statutory grounds for directed surveillance to exist (See paragraph 12.1).
- 7.2.3 The authorising officer must also believe that the activity is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved. They must balance the intrusiveness of the activity proposed on both the target and others who may be affected, against the need for the activity in operational terms.
- 7.2.4 Before authorising surveillance, the authorising officer must also take into account the risk of intrusion into the privacy of persons other than those who are the target of the investigation. This is known as collateral intrusion. The authorisation procedures allow for an assessment of collateral intrusion which the authorising officer will be required to consider prior to granting authorisation. In order to decide whether to grant authorisation the authorising officer must have a full picture of the operation, the proposed method(s) of observation and the Human Rights Act implications of the operation.
- 7.2.5 Where one agency acts on behalf of another, for example, this authority acts on behalf of a neighbouring authority, it will be the responsibility of the lead authority to obtain the authorisation.
- 7.2.6 Once authorisation is obtained, approval by a Justice of the Peace must be granted before the relevant surveillance activity can be undertaken. The requirement for Magistrates' approval applies to both authorisations and renewals.

8. **The Senior Responsible Officer's Role**

- 8.1 The Council's Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) is the Head of Trading Standards.
- 8.2 The SRO is responsible for:
- The integrity of the process in place within the Council for the management of Covert Human Intelligence Sources and Directed Surveillance
 - Compliance with Part II of RIPA and the Codes of Practice
 - Oversight of the reporting of errors to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) and the identification of both the cause(s) of errors and the implementation of processes to minimise repetition of errors

- Engagement with IPCO inspectors when they conduct their inspections
- Oversight of the implementation of any post-inspection action plan approved by the IPCO
- Ensuring that all Authorising Officers are of an appropriate standard in light of any recommendations in the inspection reports by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office.

8.3 Specific responsibilities

- 8.3.1 The Senior Responsible Officer is responsible for ensuring this **Policy Guidance is reviewed** on a regular basis with Cabinet. Cabinet is responsible for ensuring the Policy Guidance remains fit for purpose; they are not involved in making decisions on specific authorisations.
- 8.3.2 The Senior Responsible Officer is responsible for submitting **annual statistics** to the IPCO in relation to authorisations.
- 8.3.3 The Senior Responsible Officer is also responsible for communicating to the IPCO any **unauthorised activity** that might come to the attention of the authority. This must be done within 5 working days. The records, documentation, and associated documentation relating to this unauthorised activity must be retained by the Senior Responsible Officer and disclosed to the IPCO upon request, and certainly to an inspector from the IPCO at the commencement of the next scheduled inspection.
- 8.3.4 The Senior Responsible Officer must also undertake a regular review of **Errors**. The Codes of Practice provide that a written record must be made of each review and include requirements to report relevant and serious errors to the IPCO.

Officers should familiarise themselves with the requirements in the Codes of Practice relating to errors.

9. **Records**

- 9.1 The Senior Responsible Officer is responsible for ensuring a central record of authorisations and approvals is maintained. Each application must be given a Unique Reference Number, which will then be used to locate the application on the Central Record.
- 9.2 The central record and all associated documents relating to authorisations and approvals, reviews, cancellations, or renewals and refused applications should be retained in an auditable format, with each particular authorisation and approval allocated a unique reference number.
- 9.3 Records should be retained for a period of five years from the ending of the authorisation and should contain information as specified in the Codes of Practice.

10. Retention and destruction of results of investigations

- 10.1 Material obtained in the course of criminal investigations, and which may be relevant to the investigation must be recorded and retained in accordance with the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.
- 10.2 The authority must have in place arrangements for handling, storage and destruction of material obtained through the use of covert surveillance and compliance with the appropriate data protection requirements must be ensured. This is the responsibility of the Authorising Officer (see also s17 below regarding the management of material at the time of cancellation).

11. Confidential Information

- 11.1 Confidential information consists of; communications subject to legal privilege, (i.e. matters arising from the confidential lawyer – client relationship), communications between a Member of Parliament and another person on constituency matters, confidential personal information or confidential journalistic material. Special consideration must be given to authorisations that involve confidential information. If the use of surveillance may result in confidential information being acquired, the use of surveillance will be subject to a higher level of authorisation (i.e., the Head of Paid Service).
- 11.2 Confidential personal information is information held in confidence relating to the physical or mental health or spiritual counselling of a person (whether living or dead) who can be identified from it. Examples include consultations between a health professional and a patient, or information from a patient's medical records. Such information is held in confidence if it is held subject to an express or implied undertaking to hold it in confidence or it is subject to a restriction on disclosure, or an obligation of confidentiality contained in existing legislation.
- 11.3 Material which is legally privileged is particularly sensitive and an application for surveillance which is likely to result in the acquisition of legally privileged information should only be authorised in exceptional and compelling circumstances. The person authorising must also be satisfied that the proposed covert surveillance or property interference is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved.
- 11.4 Legal privilege is defined in section 98 of the Police Act 1997. This definition should be used to determine how to handle material obtained through surveillance authorised under RIPA. Special safeguards apply to matters subject to legal privilege and legal advice should be sought.
- 11.5 If there is any doubt as to the handling and dissemination of confidential information, legal advice should be sought before any further dissemination of material takes place.

12. Grounds for Authorisation

12.1 Section 28(3) of RIPA allows for authorisation for directed surveillance to be granted by an authorising officer where he believes that the authorisation is necessary in the circumstances of the particular case. In the case of a Local Authority the only circumstances allowed are: -

28(3) b for the purpose of preventing and detecting crime.

12.2 The authorising officer must also believe that the surveillance is proportionate to what it seeks to achieve. "Proportionality" is defined by paragraph 3.6 of the Covert Surveillance and Property Interference Revised Code of Practice: -

3.6 *The following elements of proportionality should therefore be considered:*

- *balancing the size and scope of the proposed activity against the gravity and extent of the perceived crime or offence;*
- *explaining how and why the methods to be adopted will cause the least possible intrusion on the subject and others;*
- *considering whether the activity is an appropriate use of the legislation and a reasonable way, having considered all reasonable alternatives, of obtaining the necessary result;*
- *evidencing, as far as reasonably practicable, what other methods had been considered and why they were not implemented.*

12.3 Authorisation must be given in writing.

12.4 Authorising officers should not ordinarily give authorisations in investigations or operations in which they are directly involved unless this is unavoidable.

13. Information to be provided in applications for authorisation

13.1 An application for authorisation for directed surveillance should be made in writing and should describe any conduct to be authorised and the purpose of the investigation or operation. The application should include:

- (a) the reasons why the authorisation is necessary.
- (b) the grounds upon which it is sought, including specifying the offence(s) under investigation.
- (c) the reasons why the surveillance is considered proportionate to what it seeks to achieve; (see paragraph 12.2) e.g., could the information be achieved by other means?
- (d) the nature of the surveillance, e.g. where will officers be located, will they use a vehicle, what equipment will be used?

- (e) the identities, where known, of those to be the subject of the surveillance;
- (f) an explanation of the information which it is desired to obtain as a result of the surveillance.
- (g) the details of any potential collateral intrusion and why the intrusion is justified.
- (h) the details of any confidential information that is likely to be obtained as a consequence of the surveillance.
- (i) the level of authority required (or recommended where that is different) of the surveillance.
- (j) a subsequent record of whether authority was given or refused, by whom and the time and date.

14. Duration of authorisations

- 14.1 A written authorisation/approval ceases to have effect unless renewed and approved at the end of a period of three months beginning with the date on which it took effect (12 months for CHIS). Note: an authorisation takes effect on the date judicial approval is granted.

15. Reviews

- 15.1 Authorisations should be reviewed regularly to assess the need for surveillance to continue. The results of a review should be recorded on the relevant form in the central record of authorisations. Particular attention should be paid to reviews where the surveillance provides access to confidential information or involves collateral intrusion.
- 15.2 It is the responsibility of the authorising officer to determine how often a review should take place and this should be as frequently as is considered necessary and practicable.

16. Renewals

- 16.1 If at any time before an authorisation would cease to have effect the authorising officer considers it necessary for the authorisation to continue for the purpose for which it was given, he may renew it in writing for a further period of three months. Magistrate approval must then be obtained prior to expiry of the original authorisation in order for activity to continue.
- 16.2 All applications for renewal of an authorisation should record:

- (a) whether this is the first renewal or every occasion on which the authorisation has been renewed previously.
- (b) any significant changes to the information contained in the original application.
- (c) the reasons why it is necessary to continue the surveillance.
- (d) the content and value to the investigation or operation of the information so far obtained from the surveillance.
- (e) the result of regular reviews of the investigation or operation.

16.3 Renewal records should be kept as part of the central record of authorisations.

17. Cancellations

17.1 The authorising officer who granted or last renewed the authorisation **must** cancel it if he is satisfied that the directed surveillance no longer meets the criteria upon which it was authorised. Where the authorising officer is no longer available, this duty will fall on the person who has taken over the role of authorising officer. If in doubt about who may cancel an authorisation, please consult nplaw. Cancellations are to be effected by completion of the cancellation [RIPA forms available on the government website](#).

17.2 It is essential that there is a completed cancellation for each authorisation once surveillance has been completed. An authorisation cannot simply be left to expire. Those acting under an authorisation must keep their authorisations under review and notify the authorising officer if they consider that the authorisation is no longer necessary or proportionate.

17.3 As soon as any decision is taken to discontinue surveillance, instruction must be given to those involved to stop all surveillance. The date and time of such an instruction must be included in the Notification of Cancellation form.

17.4 Details of the product obtained from the surveillance and whether or not objectives were achieved should be recorded on the cancellation form. The Authorising Officer should also give detailed directions on the handling, storage, review and destruction of the product of surveillance and record those details on the cancellation form.

18. Authorising the Use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS)

18.1 In most cases a human source that volunteers or provides information that is within their personal knowledge, without being induced, asked or tasked by a public authority, will not be a CHIS and therefore will not require authorisation. However, the tasking of a person is not the sole benchmark in seeking a CHIS

authorisation. It is the activity of the CHIS in exploiting a relationship for a covert purpose which is ultimately authorised by RIPA, whether or not that CHIS is asked to do so by a public authority. It is possible therefore that a person will become engaged in the conduct of a CHIS without a public authority inducing, asking or assisting the person to engage in that conduct.

18.2 Local Authorities are permitted to use CHIS. Norfolk County Council does not actively seek to recruit and use CHIS, but Officers need to be aware that such situations may arise (e.g., social media investigations). Where the use of a CHIS is being contemplated or may have arisen, legal advice must be sought from nplaw.

18.3 A person is a CHIS if:

a) he establishes or maintains a personal or other relationship with a person for a covert purpose or facilitates the doing of anything within paragraph b) or c).

b) he covertly uses such a relationship to obtain information or to provide access to any information to another person; or

c) he covertly discloses information obtained by the use of such a relationship or as a consequence of the existence of such a relationship.

18.4 The grounds for authorisation and approval under Section 29(3) of RIPA are broadly similar to those in S28(3), including the requirement for judicial approval (see paragraph 12.1 above). However, note there is no requirement to meet the serious crime threshold for CHIS.

18.5 In line with section 29(5)(a) and (b) of RIPA a “handler” and a “controller” will be appointed for each CHIS.

The person referred to in section 29(5)(a) of RIPA (the “handler”) will have day to day responsibility for dealing with the CHIS.

- directing the day to day activities of the CHIS;
- recording the information supplied by the CHIS; and
- monitoring the CHIS’s security and welfare.

The handler of a CHIS will usually be of a rank or position below that of the authorising officer.

The person referred to in section 29(5)(b) of RIPA (the “controller”) will normally be responsible for the management and supervision of the “handler” and general oversight of the use of the CHIS.

The authorising officer must ensure that there is a satisfactory risk assessment in place.

18.6 Detailed records must be kept of the authorisation (which must be in writing), and approval and use made of a CHIS. Section 29(5) of RIPA provides that

an authorising officer must not grant an authorisation for the use or conduct of a CHIS unless he believes that there are arrangements in place for ensuring that there is at all times a person with the responsibility for maintaining a record of the use made of the CHIS. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Source Records) Regulations 2000; SI No: 2725 details the particulars that must be included in these records. The records kept by public authorities should be maintained in such a way as to preserve the confidentiality, or prevent disclosure of the identity of the CHIS, and the information provided by that CHIS.

Particulars to be contained in records

The following matters are specified for the purposes of paragraph (d) of section 29(5) of the 2000 Act (as being matters particulars of which must be included in the records relating to each source):

- the identity of the source.
- the identity, where known, used by the source;
- any relevant investigating authority other than the authority maintaining the records.
- the means by which the source is referred to within each relevant investigating authority.
- any other significant information connected with the security and welfare of the source.
- any confirmation made by a person granting or renewing an authorisation for the conduct or use of a source that the information in paragraph (d) has been considered and that any identified risks to the security and welfare of the source have where appropriate been properly explained to and understood by the source.
- the date when, and the circumstances in which, the source was recruited.
- the identities of the persons who, in relation to the source, are discharging or have discharged the functions mentioned in section 29(5)(a) to (c) of the 2000 Act or in any order made by the Secretary of State under section 29(2)(c).
- the periods during which those persons have discharged those responsibilities.
- the tasks given to the source and the demands made of him in relation to his activities as a source.
- all contacts or communications between the source and a person acting on behalf of any relevant investigating authority.
- the information obtained by each relevant investigating authority by the conduct or use of the source.
- any dissemination by that authority of information obtained in that way; and
- in the case of a source who is not an undercover operative, every payment, benefit or reward and every offer of a payment, benefit or reward that is made or provided by or on behalf of any relevant investigating authority in respect of the source's activities for the benefit of that or any other relevant investigating authority.

- 18.7 Vulnerable adults and minors are the subject of special provisions when used as CHIS and require a higher level of authorisation i.e., by the Head of Paid Service. Authorisation will not be given for the collation of information from a CHIS under the age of 16 for the purpose of gathering information against his parents.
- 18.8 The Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021 provides statutory powers to certain organisations to authorise criminal conduct by a CHIS. These powers are **not** granted to local authorities and the Council cannot authorise criminal conduct.
- 18.9 Consideration should be given, in any case likely to place a CHIS at any risk of danger or of violence, to seeking assistance from Norfolk Constabulary.

19. Activities/operations involving directed surveillance

- 19.1 It is safest to assume that any operation that involves planned covert surveillance of a specific person or persons (including Council employees) likely to obtain private information, of however short a duration, falls within the definition of directed surveillance and will, therefore, be subject to authorisation under RIPA or require a non-RIPA authorisation (see section 3).
- 19.2 The consequence of not obtaining an authorisation may render the surveillance action unlawful under the HRA/ECHR, or any evidence obtained may be inadmissible in Court proceedings.
- 19.3 It is strongly recommended that Council Officers seek an authorisation, where the surveillance is likely to interfere with a person's Article 8 ECHR rights to privacy. Obtaining an authorisation will ensure that the surveillance action is carried out in accordance with the law and is subject to stringent safeguards against abuse.
- 19.4 Proper authorisation of directed surveillance should also ensure the admissibility of evidence under the common law, PACE and the Human Rights Act. Directed surveillance might be used, for example:
- For fraud or similar offences, where there is a need to observe premises in order to establish who the owner/occupier is, to find out who the occupier has associations with, or to establish whether or to what extent they are being used as business premises.
 - Where the Council directs another person/organisation to act as its 'agent' for the purposes of obtaining private information e.g., where Council Officers specifically ask residents to maintain diary notes of the incidence of sales of alcohol to young persons.
 - By placing a stationary mobile or video camera outside a building or the use by officers of covert recording equipment to record suspected illegal trading activity, such as the sale of counterfeit goods or 'mock' auctions.

19.5 It will not be necessary to obtain authorisation for directed surveillance when using surveillance devices such as standard video cameras, still cameras, or binoculars, which are utilised on an overt basis.

20. Online covert activity, including covert surveillance of Social Networking Sites

20.1 Wherever possible officers should continue to adopt overt methods in seeking to achieve business compliance. However, as a result of the scale of online trading the need to make online test purchases and investigation checks is inevitably increasing. It is therefore recognised that from time to time covert methods will need to be employed. Whenever it is intended to carry out covert activity online, officers must first consider whether the proposed activity is likely to interfere with a person's Article 8 ECHR rights, including the effect of any collateral intrusion. 'General' test purchases from an open internet site or marketplace (such as eBay) are unlikely to require RIPA authorisation. However, any covert activity likely to interfere with an individual's Article 8 ECHR rights should only be carried out when it is necessary and proportionate to meet the objectives of a specific case. Where it is considered that private information is likely to be obtained, a directed surveillance authorisation must always be sought, as set out elsewhere in this guidance.

20.2 Although social networking and internet sites are easily accessible, if they are going to be used during the course of an investigation, consideration must be given as to whether a RIPA authorisation, or non-RIPA authorisation (see section 3) should be obtained.

20.3 Viewing of open source material does not require authorisation unless and until it is repeated or systematic, at which stage a directed surveillance authorisation should be considered. Personal information should not be downloaded without such an authorisation.

20.4 Passing an access control so as to look deeper into the site, for example by making a 'friend request', requires at least directed surveillance authorisation. If the investigator is to go further and pursue enquiries within the site, thereby establishing a relationship with the site host in the guise of a member of the public, this requires CHIS authorisation.

20.5 The Home Office Revised Codes of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference and Covert Human Intelligence Sources provide detailed guidance in relation to online covert activity, including covert surveillance of Social Networking Sites. [View the RIPA codes on the government website.](#)

21. Test Purchasing of Age Restricted Products

21.1 It has long been the view that the use of young persons, pursuant to an arrangement with an officer of a public authority, to conduct test purchasing

exercises attracts the desirability to obtain RIPA authorisation for directed surveillance. The Covert Surveillance and Property Interference Revised Code of Practice states that if covert recording equipment is worn by the test purchaser, or an adult is observing the test purchase, it will be desirable to obtain an authorisation for directed surveillance.

- 21.2 Local authority use of directed surveillance under RIPA is now limited to the investigation of crimes which attract a six month or more custodial sentence, with the exception of offences relating to the underage sale of alcohol and tobacco. The majority of other age restricted products already attract a six month or more imprisonment penalty, for example gas lighter refills, fireworks, knives and solvents all attract those penalties and so RIPA would be triggered.
- 21.3 This means that in most cases a directed surveillance application would be required for test purchasing of age-restricted products. However, there may be circumstances where different age restricted products are under consideration for which a test purchasing operation is being considered. In these circumstances it is good practice to record the reasons for the decision on the 'non-RIPA' form which has been devised to cover this eventuality.
- 21.4 It is unlikely that authorisations will be considered proportionate without demonstration that overt methods have already been attempted and failed, or that they would not be appropriate given the circumstances. This may include where advice visits to establishments have taken place and subsequent intelligence of sale to minors is being received.
- 21.5 Premises identified for a test purchase may be combined within a single directed surveillance application on a 'per operation' basis, provided that each premises is clearly identified at the outset and the intelligence sufficient to prevent "fishing trips".
- 21.6 It is important that those individuals involved in the planning and conduct of test purchasing exercises avoid inciting, instigating, persuading or pressurising a person into committing an offence that, otherwise, would not have been committed. This includes giving due consideration to the impact of instructing an underage test purchaser to lie about their age if challenged by the seller of an age restricted product. The application for directed surveillance or the CHIS application must fully consider the impacts this might present together with the mitigation measures of any additional risks that may emerge as a result of the change in approach.

The individual making the test purchase is not classed as a CHIS for single transaction operations. This is because he/she does not establish or maintain a personal or other relationship with a person for the covert purpose of facilitating the obtaining of information. The one-time act of making a purchase in a shop open to the public, where there may even be no verbal exchange, cannot reasonably constitute establishing a relationship, personal or otherwise – other than a momentarily fleeting one in which no information is

obtained, which could reasonably constitute an interference with the privacy of the retailer/proprietor.

- 21.7 These assumptions are equally valid in circumstances where it is appropriate to evidence systematic breach of legislation at any given premises by using a number of different test purchasers, each making a one-off purchase. There are, however, some important qualifications to this advice. Firstly, different considerations would apply where the test purchaser has made previous visits to the premises, or is to make repeated visits, and in doing so, has established or is seeking to establish a relationship with the retailer/occupier prior to the attempted test purchase. In this case the juvenile would be revisiting in a way that encourages familiarity and as such they would be deemed a CHIS. Secondly, different considerations would apply, if the attempted test purchase is made other than from business premises open to the public, for example from a person's home including parts of their home adjacent to retail premises.
- 21.8 In circumstances where the test purchaser is not deemed to be a CHIS, it is nevertheless considered good practice to follow the requirements to ensure that:
- The safety and welfare of the test purchaser has been fully considered.
 - Any risk has been properly explained to, and understood by the test purchaser; and
 - A risk assessment has been undertaken, covering the physical dangers including any moral and psychological aspects of the test purchaser's deployment.
- 21.9 In the vast majority of test purchase operations, it is likely that there will be minimal risk to the test purchaser involved. Where an operation differs in the standard approach, for example where the test purchaser of an age restricted product may be asked to lie about their age, a directed surveillance or CHIS application must fully consider the mitigation of any additional risks that may emerge as a result of the change in approach.

22. Activities/operations not involving directed surveillance

- 22.1 Directed surveillance is conducted where it involves the observation of a person or persons with the intention of gathering private information to produce a detailed picture of a person's life, activities and associations. Private information includes any information relating to the person's private or family life.
- 22.2 However, it does not include general observation which is part of an Enforcement Officer's normal work.
- 22.3 General observation duties of the Council's Enforcement Officers whether overt or covert, frequently form part of their day-to-day activities and the Council's legislative core functions – such activities will not normally require a

directed surveillance authorisation as the obtaining of private information is highly unlikely.

22.4 Examples of activities/operations which are unlikely to involve directed surveillance are:

- Enforcement officer's attendance at a car boot sale where it is suspected that counterfeit goods are being sold. In such a case, the officer is not carrying out surveillance of particular individuals - the intention is, through enforcement, to identify and tackle offenders.
- A one-off identification/confirmation of the existence of a premises address by officer observation.
- Anything which constitutes an immediate response e.g., a council officer with regulatory responsibilities may by chance be present when an individual is potentially infringing the law and it is necessary to observe, follow, or engage in other surveillance tactics as an instant response to the situation to gather further information or evidence. Once this immediacy has passed, however, any further directed surveillance of the individual, must be subject to a RIPA authorisation.

22.5 In circumstances where such activities/operations are considered to fall outside the scope of RIPA, it is good practice to record the reasons for this decision.

23. Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office

23.1 The Investigatory Powers Commissioner is an independent person who has oversight of the operation of RIPA. Public bodies are liable to inspection on behalf of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner and have a duty to produce records and comply with requests for information made by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner or his inspectors.

24. Safeguarding Surveillance Material Obtained

24.1 The revised Codes set out significant requirements relating to the handling of any material obtained as a result of surveillance or the use of a CHIS. Officers should familiarise themselves with the requirements in the Codes relating to safeguarding. Officers should also refer to any Departmental policies regarding evidential material.

25. Guidance

25.1 Further information and guidance is available via the Home Office webpages:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/ripa-codes

26. Whistleblowing

- 26.1 Norfolk County Council staff should report any concerns they have about colleagues or themselves undertaking unauthorised directed surveillance or handling a CHIS in accordance with the Norfolk County Council Whistleblowing policy.

27. Complaints

- 27.1 Where any person expresses their dissatisfaction with a surveillance operation carried out by the Council or with a communications data issue and they are either unwilling to accept an explanation or are dissatisfied with the explanation offered or they wish to complain about any other aspect of the Council's operations under RIPA, they must be informed of the existence of the Investigatory Powers Tribunal.
- 27.2 Every assistance shall be given to the person to complain to the Council's Corporate Complaints Officer or to contact the Tribunal and make their dissatisfaction known to it.
- 27.3 The address for the Investigatory Powers Tribunal is:

PO Box 33220
London
SW1H 9ZQ.
Tel: 0207 035 3711
Website address: www.ipt-uk.com

PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING AUTHORISATION FOR DIRECTED SURVEILLANCE OR USE OF CHIS UNDER RIPA

DIRECTED SURVEILLANCE

1. Applying for Authorisation

- 1.1 Where an Investigating Officer believes that there is a need for Directed Surveillance during the course of an investigation, an Application for Authority for Directed Surveillance must be completed [see appendix B] after discussion with the relevant line manager, if appropriate.
- 1.2 The completed form must be submitted to the Authorising Officer [see appendix A for departmental Authorising Officers.]
- 1.3 The Authorising Officer can only approve an application where the statutory grounds for doing so are met.
- 1.4 Where the Authorising Officer is satisfied that the criteria for granting authorisation are met, he will approve the application and return a copy of the endorsed application to the Applicant. In authorising the application, the Authorising Officer will set the first review date and specify the expiry date in accordance with the prompts provided on the authorisation forms (3 months less one day for directed surveillance; 12 months less one day for CHIS).

2. The judicial approval process

- 2.1 Once an application has been authorised by an authorising officer, it will not take effect until it has been approved by a Justice of the Peace (JP).
- 2.2 The process for seeking judicial approval is as follows: -
 - The local authority must contact HMCTS to arrange a hearing, or to deal with the matter administratively.
 - The JP should be provided with a copy of the authorisation/notice, all supporting documentation and a partially completed judicial approval/order form. (The original authorisation/notice should be provided to the JP.)
 - Unless dealt with administratively, a hearing will usually take place in private, usually attended by the case investigator, who will be best placed to answer the JP's questions about the investigation. However, in some cases, for example where there are sensitive issues, it may be appropriate for the Authorising Officer to attend to answer questions.
 - The JP will consider the application and record his/her decision on the order section of the application/order form.

2.3 The JP may decide to: -

- Approve the grant or renewal of the authorisation/notice;
- Refuse to approve the grant or renewal of the authorisation/notice;
- Refuse to approve the grant or renewal and quash the authorisation/notice.

2.4 For the form for seeking judicial approval, see Appendix B.

2.5.1 Once approved by a JP, the Authorising Officer must ensure that a copy of the completed application and approval documentation is included within the central record of authorisations and send a notification to nplaw.

3. Reviewing Authorisations

3.1 The Authorising Officer, in granting the Authorisation, will endorse it with a review date. At the review the Applicant will complete the Review of Directed Surveillance Authorisation form [see appendix B] for consideration by the Authorising Officer. The Authorising Officer is responsible for determining whether the grounds for continued surveillance remain. If not, the application should be cancelled.

3.2 It is recommended that authorisations are reviewed in accordance with timescales decided by the Authorising Officer but on at least a monthly basis (although this should not be the automatic default).

3.3 The Authorising Officer must ensure that a copy of the Review of Directed Surveillance Authorisation documentation is included within the central record of authorisations and send a notification to nplaw.

4. Refusing Authorisations

4.1 Where the Authorising Officer is not satisfied that the criteria for granting an authorisation for directed surveillance are met, he will refuse the application and endorse the application accordingly.

5. Cancelling Authorisations

5.1 Any activity authorised under RIPA must be kept under review. Where surveillance is completed the Applicant will complete a Cancellation of Directed Surveillance form [see appendix B] and forward it to the Authorising Officer for approval.

5.2 The Authorising Officer must ensure that a copy of the cancellation documentation is included within the central record of authorisations and send a notification to nplaw.

6. Renewals

- 6.1 Authorisations last for a maximum of 3 months in the first instance and must be renewed if surveillance is to continue beyond this time limit. The Applicant is responsible for ensuring that any application for a renewal is made in a timely manner.
- 6.2 Where it is necessary to renew an authorisation, the Applicant will complete a Renewal of Directed Surveillance Authorisation form and forward it to the Authorising Officer for approval. The Applicant must then obtain approval for the renewal from a Justice of the Peace, using the specified form and supplying the required authorisation documentation, before the expiry of the original authorisation in order for the activity to continue.
- 6.3 The Authorising Officer will arrange for the original application and renewal approval documentation to be included within the central record of authorisations and send a notification to nplaw.

7. Retention of Authorisation Records

- 7.1 The SRO will retain records relating to authorisations under RIPA for 5 years from the date authorisation was granted or renewed.

8. COVERT HUMAN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES

- 8.1 Applications, Reviews, Cancellations and Renewals apply in relation to CHIS as above, and there are separate forms applicable to such applications [See appendix B.]
- 8.2 The Authorising Officer should not grant any such application without first considering whether to take legal advice.

APPENDIX A OFFICERS

NCC Chief Executive

- Tom McCabe (Authorising Officer for confidential information and Vulnerable Adult/Minor CHIS)

Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)

- Sophie Leney, Head of Trading Standards

Authorising Officers

- Alice Barnes, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Duncan Carter, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Shaun Norris, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Jon Peddle, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Nick Johnson, Head of Planning
- Emyr Gough, Head of Prevention and Protection – Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service

APPENDIX B RIPA FORMS

You can download all [RIPA forms available on the government website](#). It is your responsibility to ensure that you are using the current version of the RIPA forms.

The form to be used for applications for Magistrate approval, in both the Directed Surveillance and CHIS sections is under [Changes to local authority use of RIPA on the government website](#).

Directed Surveillance

1. Application for Directed Surveillance Authorisation
2. Review of Directed Surveillance Authorisation
3. Cancellation of Directed Surveillance Authorisation
4. Renewal of Directed Surveillance Authorisation
5. Magistrate approval of authorisation/renewal.

Covert Human Intelligence Sources

6. Application for Use of CHIS
7. Review of CHIS Authorisation
8. Cancellation of CHIS Authorisation
9. Renewal of CHIS Authorisation
10. Magistrate approval of authorisation/renewal.

Please also see:

[Download the Home Office Guidance to Local Authorities](#)

The application process to the Magistrates is explained from page 10 onwards.



Accessing Communications Data

Investigatory Powers Act 2016

Policy and Guidance Notes

nplaw
Norfolk Public Law

Last Reviewed February 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA) regulates access to Communications Data. This policy should be read in conjunction with the current Home Office Code of Practice on Communications Data. [Download the Code of Practice on Communications Data from the Gov.uk website.](#)
- 1.2 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) regulates investigatory actions involving surveillance and the use of covert human intelligence sources. These actions are therefore outside the scope of this guide and reference should be made to the Council's "Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000" guidance.
- 1.3 Communications data includes the 'who', 'when', 'where', and 'how' of a communication but not the content i.e. what was said or written. It includes the way in which, and by what method, a person or thing communicates with another person or thing. It excludes anything within a communication including text, audio and video that reveals the meaning, other than inferred meaning.

It can include the address to which a letter is sent, the time and duration of a communication, the telephone number or email address of the originator and recipient, and the location of the device. It covers electronic communications including internet access, internet telephony, instant messaging and the use of applications. It also includes postal services.

Communications data is generated, held or obtained in the provision, delivery and maintenance of communications services including telecommunications or postal services.

Application to the County Council

- 1.4 The County Council is only entitled to seek the acquisition of communications data defined as Entity data and/or Events data. Both these terms are defined within the Code of Practice at paragraph 2.38 through to 2.43 for Entity Data, and from para 2.44 to 2.45 for Events Data.

The interception of postal, telephone, email and other electronic communications

- 1.5 There is no legal means for the County Council to 'intercept communications data' under the IPA.

2.0 Authorising the acquisition and disclosure of communications data

Authorisation

- 2.1 It is crucial that the acquisition of communications data is properly authorised. No officer may seek the acquisition of any form of communications data unless he is authorised to do so, an Approved Rank Officer is aware of the Application, and the application has been provided to the Single Point of Contact (SPoC) and approved by the Office for Communications Data Authorisations (OCDA) in accordance with the Code of Practice.

Failure to secure proper approval and to comply with this procedure could lead to evidence being excluded by Courts, complaints against the Council, and in some cases the commission of criminal offences. The Council is subject to audit and inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, and it is important that we demonstrate compliance with the IPA.

Acquisition of communications data

- 2.2 Where an authorisation for the acquisition of communications data has been granted, persons within a public authority may engage in conduct relating to a postal service or telecommunication system, or to data derived from a telecommunication system, to obtain communications data.

The following types of conduct may be authorised:

- conduct to acquire communications data - including obtaining data directly or asking any person believed to be in possession of or capable of obtaining such data to obtain and disclose it; and/or
- giving of a notice – requiring a telecommunications operator to obtain and disclose the required data.

- 2.3 In the case of Norfolk County Council the physical acquisition of communications data will be facilitated through our membership of the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN), with NAFN providing a comprehensive SPoC service.
- 2.4 It will be the responsibility of NAFN to ensure all requests to a telecommunications/postal operator for communications data, pursuant to the granting of an authorisation, comply with the requirements of the Code of Practice, specifically para's 6.1 to 6.18.

3.0 Roles & Responsibilities

- 3.1 Acquisition of communications data under the IPA involves four roles:
- (a) Applicant.
 - (b) Approved Rank Officer (ARO).

- (c) Single point of contact (SPoC).
- (d) Senior Responsible Officer in a Public Authority (SRO)

The Applicant

- 3.2 The applicant is a person involved in conducting or assisting an investigation or operation within a relevant public authority who makes an application in writing or electronically for the acquisition of communications data.

Any person in a public authority which is permitted to acquire communications data may be an applicant, subject to any internal controls or restrictions put in place within public authorities.

Approved Rank Officer (ARO)

- 3.3 The Approved Rank Officer is a person who is a manager at service level or above within the Public Authority. The ARO's role is to have an awareness of the application made by the Applicant and convey this to the SPoC when requested to do so.

The ARO does not authorise or approve any element of the application and is not required to be 'operationally independent'. The AROs for Norfolk County Council are identified in **Appendix I**.

The Single Point of Contact (SPoC)

- 3.4 The SPoC is an individual trained to facilitate the lawful acquisition of communications data and effective co-operation between a public authority, the Office for Communications Data Authorisations (OCDA) and telecommunications and postal operators. To become accredited an individual must complete a course of training appropriate for the role of a SPoC and have been issued the relevant SPoC unique identifier.

Public authorities are expected to provide SPoC coverage for all communications data acquisitions that they reasonably expect to make. Norfolk County Council is a member of the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN). NAFN is an accredited body for the purpose of providing data and intelligence under the IPA for all public bodies. As part of their portfolio, they offer a comprehensive SPoC service.

Authorising Agency (OCDA)

- 3.5 The Office for Communications Data Authorisations (OCDA) is the independent body responsible for the authorisation and assessment of all Data Communications applications under the IPA. They undertake the following roles:

- Independent assessment of all Data Communications applications.
- Authorisation of any appropriate applications.

- Ensuring accountability of Authorities in the process and safeguarding standards.

The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)

3.6 The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) is a person of a senior rank, a manager at service level or above within the Public Authority. The SRO for Norfolk County Council is identified in **Appendix 1**.

The SRO is responsible for:

- the integrity of the process in place within the public authority to acquire communications data.
- engagement with authorising officers in the Office for Communications Data Authorisations (where relevant).
- compliance with Part 3 of the IPA and with the Code of Practice, including responsibility for novel or contentious cases.
- oversight of the reporting of errors to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) and the identification of both the cause(s) of errors and the implementation of processes to minimise repetition of errors.
- ensuring the overall quality of applications submitted to OCDA.
- engagement with the IPCO's inspectors during inspections; and
- where necessary, oversight of the implementation of post-inspection action plans approved by the IPCO.

4.0 Necessity & Proportionality Test

When should an Application for Communications Data be made?

4.1 Applications for the acquisition of Communications Data should only be made where it is **necessary** for an '**Applicable Crime Purpose**', as defined by Section 60(A) of the IPA.

This allows for applications to be made for '**Entity data**', previously referred to as subscriber data, where the purpose of obtaining the data is for the **prevention and detection of crime**. This definition permits the obtaining of Entity data for 'any' crime, irrespective of seriousness.

Applications for '**Events data**', previously referred to as service or traffic data, requires a higher standard, and applications for this data should only be made where the purpose is the 'prevention and detection of **serious crime**'. Serious crime is defined in Section 86(2A) of the IPA, and includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Any crime that provides the potential for a 12mth+ sentence of imprisonment. (Either way or indictable offences)
- Offences committed by Corporate Bodies

- Any offence involving, **as an integral part**, the sending of a communication OR a breach of a person's privacy.

Applications should only be made where they are proportionate, and alternative means of obtaining the information are either, exhausted, not available or considered not practical to obtain the same information.

However, use of applications to obtain data **should not be considered a last resort**. Where applications are 'proportionate & necessary' the IPA should be used as a tool to advance criminal investigations efficiently and quickly, and where this is considered by the Local Authority to be in the public interest, and in the interest of suspects.

Any Applicant must ensure clear explanation is provided to demonstrate the necessity and proportionality test in any application, and the Approved Rank Officer must be satisfied that such explanation has been provided. Where any explanation is insufficient it should be referred back by the Approved Rank Officer to the applicant for rework.

How should we demonstrate Necessity?

4.2 A short explanation must be provided in every application explaining:

- (a) The event under investigation, such as a crime.
- (b) The person whose data is sought, such as a suspect **AND** a description of how they are linked to the event.
- (c) The communications data sought, such as a telephone number or IP address, and how this data is related to the person and event.

The application must explain the link between the three aspects to demonstrate the acquisition of communications data is necessary.

How should we demonstrate Proportionality?

4.3 Applications should include the following key explanations.

- (a) An outline of how obtaining the data will benefit the investigation. The relevance of the data being sought should be explained and anything which might undermine the application.
- (b) The relevance of time periods requested.
- (c) How the level of intrusion is justified against any benefit the data will give to the investigation. This should include consideration of whether less intrusive investigations could be undertaken.

- (d) A consideration of the rights (particularly to privacy and, in relevant cases, freedom of expression) of the individual and a balancing of these rights against the benefit to the investigation.
- (e) Any details of what collateral intrusion may occur and how the time periods requested impact on the collateral intrusion, if applicable.
- (f) Where no collateral intrusion will occur, **such as when applying for entity data**, the absence of collateral intrusion should be noted.
- (g) Any circumstances which give rise to significant collateral intrusion.
- (h) Any possible unintended consequences. This is more likely in more **complicated requests for events data** or in **applications for the data of those in professions with duties of confidentiality**, e.g., journalists/doctors/solicitors.

Type of Data not permitted to be requested by the Local Authority

4.4 The following data is not permitted to be applied for by the Local Authority:

- Internet Connection Records
- Content of data communications e.g., content of text messages, emails etc.

5.0 The Application Procedure

Applying for authority to acquire communications data

- 5.1 Applicants must submit applications through the central NAFN (SPoC) portal. Applicants will need to be registered with NAFN to access the portal and have valid login and security details. An allocated SPoC officer will then check all applications for legal compliance and, where necessary, provide feedback. NAFN will then request confirmation from a local authority Approved Rank Officer (ARO) of their awareness of the application before submitting for authorisation to the OCDA.
- 5.2 The OCDA will independently assess each application and will undertake one of the following actions.
 - Authorise the application
 - Require reworking of the application
 - Reject the application

Authorised Applications

- 5.3 Where the OCDA authorises the communications data request, this decision is communicated to the SPoC (NAFN), and actions are taken to request the data from the relevant telecommunications providers and other agencies holding such communications data to provide the necessary data.

Reworking Applications

- 5.4 Where rework is required, the application will be returned to the applicant, via the SPoC and the **applicant will have 14 calendar days to rework** the application and resubmit. Failure to rework the application within the 14 days will result in the application being automatically rejected.

Rejected Applications

- 5.5 Where the OCDA rejects an application, the Authority has three options.
- Cease to proceed with the application
 - Re-submit the application with revised justification and/or revised course of conduct to acquire the data
 - Re-submit the application without alteration and request a review of the decision by the OCDA.

In the case of seeking a review, or effectively appealing against the original determination **the Authority has 7 calendar days to seek the review**. Any appeal must be made by the Authority's SRO. The OCDA will provide guidance on this process.

Notices in Pursuance of an Authorisation

- 5.6 The giving of a notice is appropriate where a telecommunications operator or postal operator can retrieve or obtain specific data, and disclose that data, and the relevant authorisation has been granted. A notice may require a telecommunications operator or postal operator to obtain any communications data, if that data is not already in its possession.
- 5.7 For Local Authorities the role to issue Notices to telecommunications/postal operators sits with the SPoC (NAFN), and it will be the SPoC's role to ensure notices are given in accordance with the Code of Practice meeting the requirements of 6.19 to 6.29 of the Code.

Duration of authorisations and notices

- 5.8 An authorisation becomes valid on the date the authorisation is granted by the OCDA. It remains valid for a maximum of one month. Any conduct authorised or notice served should be commenced/served within that month.
- 5.9 Any notice given under an authorisation remains in force until complied with or until the authorisation under which it was given is cancelled.
- 5.10 All authorisations should relate to a specific date(s) or period(s), including start and end dates, and these should be clearly indicated in the authorisation.

Where the data to be acquired or disclosed is specified as 'current', the relevant date is the date on which the authorisation was granted.

Please note however that where a date or period cannot be specified other than for instance; 'the last transaction' or 'the most recent use of the service', it is still permitted to request the data for that unspecifiable period.

- 5.11 Where the request relates to specific data that will or may be generated in the future, the future period is restricted to no more than one month from the date of authorisation.

Renewal of authorisations and notices.

- 5.12 A valid authorisation may be renewed for a period of up to one month by the grant of a further authorisation and takes effect upon the expiry of the original authorisation. This may be appropriate where there is a continuing requirement to acquire or obtain data that may be generated in the future.
- 5.13 The Applicant will need to consider whether the application for renewal remains 'necessary and proportionate' and should reflect this in any renewal application made. The Authorising body (OCDA) will need to consider this carefully in authorising any renewal.

Cancellation of an Authorisation where it is no longer Necessary/Proportionate

- 5.14 Where it comes to the Authority's attention after an authorisation has been granted that it is no longer necessary or proportionate, the authority is under a duty to notify the SPoC (NAFN) immediately.
- 5.15 It is the SPoC's (NAFN) responsibility to cease the authorised action and take steps to notify the telecommunications service provider. E.g., Such a scenario may occur where a legitimate application has been made for Entity data to identify and locate a suspect, but subsequently, and before the data has been acquired the Authority becomes aware by some other legitimate means of the suspect's name and address etc.

6.0 Offences

- 6.1 Under section 11 of the IPA, it is an offence for a person in a public authority knowingly or recklessly to obtain communications data from a telecommunications operator or postal operator without lawful authority.
- 6.2 The roles and responsibilities laid down for the Senior Responsible Officer and SPoC are designed to prevent the knowing or reckless acquisition of communications data by a public authority without lawful authorisation. Adherence to the requirements of the IPA and this Code, including procedures detailed in this Policy, will mitigate the risk of any offence being committed.
- 6.3 An offence is not committed if the person obtaining the data can show that they acted in the reasonable belief that they had lawful authority.

6.4 It is not an offence to obtain communications data where it is made publicly or commercially available by a telecommunications/postal operator. In such circumstances the consent of the operator provides the lawful authority. However, public authorities should not require, or invite, any operator to disclose communications data by relying on this exemption.

7.0 Keeping of records

7.1 Applications, authorisations, copies of notices, and records of the withdrawal and cancellation of authorisations, must be retained in written or electronic form by the Council for 5 years. A record must be kept of the date and, when appropriate, the time each notice or authorisation is granted, renewed or cancelled.

7.2 Records kept must be held centrally by the SPoC and be available for inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office upon request and retained to allow the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT), to carry out its functions. The retention of documents service will be provided by NAFN. In addition, the ARO must provide the SRO with copies of the records referred to in 7.1 above, for the purposes of the SRO monitoring role.

7.3 Nothing in the Code or this policy affects similar duties under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 requiring material which is obtained in the course of an investigation, and which may be relevant to the investigation to be recorded, retained and revealed to the prosecutor.

7.4 For full details of the level of information expected to be retained by the SPoC reference should be made to the Code, para's 24.1 to 24.9.

8.0 Recordable/Reportable Errors

8.1 Where any error occurs in the granting of an authorisation or because of any authorised conduct a record should be kept.

8.2 Where the error results in communications data being acquired or disclosed incorrectly, a report must be made to the IPCO by whoever is responsible for it. ('reportable error'). E.g., The telecommunications operator must report the error if it resulted from them disclosing data not requested, whereas if the error is because the public authority provided incorrect information, they must report the error. The SRO would be the appropriate person to make the report to the IPCO.

8.3 Where an error has occurred before data has been acquired or disclosed incorrectly, a record will be maintained by the public authority ('recordable error'). These records must be available for inspection by the IPCO.

8.4 A non-exhaustive list of reportable and recordable errors is provided in the Code at para 24.25.

9.0 Notification of serious errors under the IPA

- 9.1 There may be rare occasions when communications data is wrongly acquired or disclosed and this amounts to a 'serious error'. A serious error is anything that **'caused significant prejudice or harm to the person concerned.'** It is insufficient that there has been a breach of a person's human rights.
- 9.2 In these cases, the public authority which made the error, or established that the error had been made, must report the error to the authority's Senior Responsible Officer and the IPCO.
- 9.3 When an error is reported to the IPCO, the IPC may inform the affected individual subject of the data disclosure, who may make a complaint to the IPT. The IPC must be satisfied that the error is a) a serious error AND b) it is in the public interest for the individual concerned to be informed of the error.
- 9.4 Before deciding if the error is serious or not the IPC will accept submissions from the Public Authority regarding whether it is in the public interest to disclose. For instance, it may not be in the public interest to disclose if to do so would be prejudicial to the 'prevention and detection of crime'.

10.0 Notification in criminal proceedings

- 10.1 When communications data has been acquired during a criminal investigation that comes to trial an individual may be made aware data has been obtained.
- 10.2 If communications data is used to support the prosecution case it will appear in the 'served' material as evidence and a copy provided to the defendant.
- 10.3 Where communications data is not served but retained as unused material it is subject to the rules governing disclosure under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA). The prosecution should reveal the existence of communications data to a defendant on a schedule of non-sensitive unused material, only if that data is relevant, and copies of the material may be provided to the defendant if it might reasonably be considered capable of undermining the prosecution case and/or assisting the defence.
- 10.4 Where communications data is acquired but not directly relied on to prove offences, the material may alternatively be listed in the schedule of 'Sensitive' unused material and not disclosed to the defendant. The CPIA sets out exemptions to the disclosure obligation. Under section 3(6) of that Act, data must not be disclosed if it is material which, on application by the prosecutor, the Court concludes it is not in the public interest to disclose. Any communications data which comes within the scope of this exemption cannot be disclosed. E.g., Material that reveals a 'method of investigation' is usually not disclosable.
- 10.5 If through any of the above notification processes, an individual suspects that their communications data has been wrongly acquired, the Investigatory Powers Tribunal ("IPT") provides a right of redress. An individual may make a

complaint to the IPT without the individual knowing, or having to demonstrate, that any investigatory powers have been used against them.

11.0 Guidance

11.1 Further information and guidance is available via the Home Office webpages:

[Investigatory Powers Act: codes of practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/investigatory-powers-act-codes-of-practice)

12. Whistleblowing

12.1 Norfolk County Council staff should report any concerns they have about colleagues or themselves undertaking unauthorised acquisition of communications data in accordance with the Norfolk County Council Whistleblowing policy.

APPENDIX 1

Officers

NCC Chief Executive

- Tom McCabe

Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)

- Sophie Leney, Head of Trading Standards

Approved Rank Officers

- Alice Barnes, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Duncan Carter, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Shaun Norris, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Jon Peddle, Section Manager – Trading Standards
- Nick Johnson, Head of Planning
- Emyr Gough, Head of Prevention and Protection – Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service

SPoC Service provided by NAFN

Cabinet

Item No: 13

Decision making report title: Strategic and Financial Planning 2025-26

Date of meeting: 8 May 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Andrew Jamieson (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance)

Responsible Director: Harvey Bullen, Director of Strategic Finance

Is this a key decision? Yes

If this is a key decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 5 March 2024

Introduction from Cabinet Member

This report marks the formal start of the Council's annual budget setting process for 2025-26. The 2024-25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed by the Council in February 2024 provides a sound foundation upon which to develop the 2025-26 Budget, but it is nevertheless essential for the Council to have a robust plan in place to enable the preparation of a balanced and sustainable budget. It is the Budget, through the allocation and prioritisation of resources, which provides the framework that enables the achievement of the organisation's key ambitions alongside the delivery of vital services. It is the intention of Cabinet to work with Departments to ensure that savings and pressures linked to demand and demography, are sufficiently robust, so as to ensure that any rise in Council tax is kept to a minimum.

With an upcoming general election, there is very significant uncertainty about funding levels for 2025-26 onwards. One such area of uncertainty is the second homes premium, which may provide some welcome additional funding to support the County Council budget. Alongside this, the Council will seek to earmark an element of the additional funding for use in the area where it has been generated. Further details will be developed when there is greater certainty about the likely income from this source, later in the budget process. In relation to wider funding expectations, the Government's Policy Statement published shortly before the 2024-25 Finance Settlement provided no detail of future year allocations. In this context, and in particular recognising the wider pressures both on demand and within the economy, we must continue to safeguard the delivery of the essential local services which are used and relied on by so many of the County's residents, businesses and visitors.

This report therefore sets out the framework for how the Council will approach budget setting for 2025-26. The proposed approach to budget setting will be informed by the key objectives set out in the Better Together, for Norfolk strategy and as such the

[https://norfolkcounty.sharepoint.com/sites/GOVDR-DemocraticServices/CommitteeSupport/current/Cabinet/Agenda/2024/240508/13 Strategic and Financial Planning - Saving targets.docx](https://norfolkcounty.sharepoint.com/sites/GOVDR-DemocraticServices/CommitteeSupport/current/Cabinet/Agenda/2024/240508/13%20Strategic%20and%20Financial%20Planning%20-%20Saving%20targets.docx)

Budget represents one of the key building blocks contributing to the delivery of the Council's strategy and direction over the next few years.

Executive Summary

The Council has a robust and well-established process for annual budget setting, including the development of savings proposals, and the scrutiny and challenge of all elements of the budget. This report sets out proposals for how this can be further refined with a greater emphasis on balancing the financial position over the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) period, whilst maintaining the focus on delivering a prudent and transparent approach to budgeting for 2025-26. The proposed approach incorporates the usual required key elements such as public consultation, Scrutiny, and engagement with Select Committees. This report proposes the Budget planning cycle for 2025-26 to start immediately.

As part of 2025-26 Budget setting, a thorough review of identified future cost pressures will also be required. It is particularly important to recognise that recent Budgets have included exceptional levels of inflationary growth pressure, which will not be sustainable in future years, but which reflected the wider operating and economic environment. There may be opportunities to draw back on some of these 2024-25 pressures and this will need to be kept under review as budget monitoring for the year progresses. In addition, the 2024-25 position was supported by one-off measures including use of reserves, which represent a challenge to be addressed in future years. As has been previously identified, the ongoing reliance on reserves does not represent a sustainable long-term approach.

As in previous years, the wider budget position remains the subject of high levels of uncertainty, and despite the publication of the [DLUHC Policy Statement](#) there is no indication of 2025-26 funding levels. In this context, this report sets out details of a proposed budget planning process for 2025-26 but recognises that as always there may be a need for some flexibility. The report accordingly provides a summary of key areas of wider risk and uncertainty for Cabinet to consider.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended:

- 1. To consider the overall budget gap of £135.908m included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set by Full Council in February 2024, and agree:**
 - a. the gap of £44.722m to be closed for 2025-26; and**
 - b. the extension of the MTFS by a further year (to 2028-29), adding a further £52.744m to the gap and resulting in additional pressure assumptions to be addressed and leading to an overall gap for planning purposes of £188.652m over the next four years. (Section 2).**

2. **To review the key budget risks and uncertainties as set out in this report. (Section 10).**
3. **To consider the principles of the proposed approach to budget setting for 2025-26, noting that there may be a need for flexibility within both the process itself and the assumptions applied, and agree:**
 - a. **the process and indicative timetable set out in Section 3, including the proposed consultation process for 2025-26.**
 - b. **that there should be a detailed review of cost pressures and growth already provided within the Budget against actual costs experienced to identify any opportunities for budget reduction.**
 - c. **the minimum savings targets allocated to each Department to be found (Table 8), and that these will be kept under review throughout the budget process.**
4. **To approve the initial budget virements for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix 1, reflecting budget transfers for whole services between departments as a result of the Employment Committee of 18 March 2024, while noting the virements do not change the overall Council Budget.**

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1. In recent years the significant and sustained reductions experienced in Central Government funding to Local Government have lessened, with more generous funding settlements being provided since 2021-22. However, much of the new funding was initially for adult social care reforms and was accompanied by an increasing expectation that local authorities will raise resources locally (through council tax). Alongside this, there continues to be a significant gap between funding and service pressures driven by a complex mix of factors including demographic changes, unfunded burdens such as the National Living Wage, the needs of the people who draw upon social care services becoming increasingly complex, and by the wider economy including (more recently) the abnormally high levels of inflation.
- 1.2. Children's services, in both social care and education remain under very significant stress, and the 2024-25 Local Government Finance Settlement encouraged councils to invest in areas that help place children's social care services on a sustainable financial footing. Other Council services also remain subject to significant financial stress from sustained inflation pressures which have a widespread impact across service delivery and commissioned services. These in their turn have a knock on effect by increasing the pressure placed on discretionary and preventative services both in relation to the need for these to stem and reduce demand, and because these are often the areas called upon to make budgetary savings.
- 1.3. The Council's February 2024 MTFS identified that the Council, in common with other upper tier local authorities, needs to address a material budget shortfall

in 2025-26. Simultaneously, as set out in this report, there remains particularly acute uncertainty about the level of funding for 2025-26 and the potential for additional pressures to emerge during the budget setting process. Although the Council's track record of delivering a balanced budget, coupled with a robust budget planning approach, provides a solid basis for development, it is prudent to begin comprehensive planning for 2025-26 now.

- 1.4. As has been the case in recent years, it is anticipated that the Council will not receive any further detailed information about funding allocations for 2025-26 until autumn 2024 at the earliest (and probably December 2024). This is even more the case this year, as almost all of the Government's planned reform of local government funding has been delayed until at least 2026-27. With the expected General Election in 2024 it is extremely unlikely that the 2025-26 Settlement will provide any sort of multi-year allocation which would support the Council to develop its financial strategy with greater planning certainty. As a result, the overall level of uncertainty means that budget setting for 2025-26, and the wider financial environment for local government, is set to remain highly challenging.
- 1.5. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's [2024 Spring Budget](#) on 6 March 2024, but this did not include further significant policy announcements in terms of local government funding, which would impact on the budget position.
- 1.6. Therefore, as in previous years, this report represents the start of the Council's process for setting the 2025-26 Budget and developing the associated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The report sets out the context and a proposed approach to budget setting including:
 - A summary of the Budget and MTFS approved by Full Council in February 2024, including the savings already planned for future years.
 - An overview of the significant remaining uncertainties facing local government finances.
 - The MTFS position for 2025-26 onwards as agreed in February 2024, extended for a further year to support 2025-26 Budget setting.
 - A proposed timetable for 2025-26 Budget setting including the recommended approach to public consultation.
 - Proposed savings targets by Department, representing the minimum target to be sought in order to enable Member choice about the ultimate budget decisions to be made in February 2025.
- 1.7. Ultimately this report is intended to support the Council in preparing the 2025-26 Budget and identifying savings which will assist in delivering a balanced budget for the year.

2. Budget context and Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 2.1. On 20 February 2024, the County Council approved the 2024-25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2027-28. Based on currently

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available information, the **MTFS set out a budget gap of £135.908m over the period 2025-26 to 2027-28** based on an assumption that the funding allocations set out in the 2024-25 final Local Government Finance Settlement¹ would be broadly “rolled over” for 2025-26 and beyond.

- 2.2. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2024-25 itself only set out funding allocations for one year. The continued failure to publish full medium term funding forecasts remains 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 2026-27), 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.
- 2.3. Announcements in the Final Settlement provided additional funding of £9.539m compared to the previously announced provisional allocations for 2024-25. As a result the 2024-25 Settlement enabled the Council to prepare a balanced 2024-25 Budget, but was not sufficient to support a balanced position over the life of the MTFS. The Council therefore continues to expect to need to draw on its earmarked reserves over the period covered by the MTFS. This is not however a sustainable position in the longer term. Current planning does not include any draw on the Council’s general balances, which are planned to be maintained at the minimum level of at least 5% of the net revenue budget. The use of reserves is also in part a reflection of the various severe cost pressures and challenges in achieving planned savings, which the Council faces across almost all service areas. It is important to recognise that as a result, the Council is not in a position to be able to remove or reverse any of the saving proposals agreed as part of the 2024-25 budget, including those savings which are due for implementation during 2025-26.
- 2.4. The table below sets out the high level MTFS position as agreed in February 2024, which has been updated to reflect the addition of a further financial year (for 2028-29) to the planning period in order to maintain the Council’s usual four year MTFS horizon.
- 2.5. As previously stated, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) agreed in February 2024 set out a gap of £135.908m for the period including **a gap of £44.722m for the first year, 2025-26**. Extending the MTFS for an additional year, 2028-29, based on the same broad assumptions, adds a further £52.744m to the gap to be addressed, resulting in **a total revised gap of £188.652m for the MTFS**. The forecast gap for 2025-26 remains unchanged.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/final-local-government-finance-settlement-england-2024-to-2025>

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Table 1: Extended MTFS 2024-25 to 2028-29

	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Growth Pressures					
Economic and inflationary	34.670	24.044	24.360	24.902	25.502
Legislative requirements	38.017	7.850	6.500	6.500	6.500
Demand and demographic	39.732	37.608	37.110	38.230	38.161
Policy decisions	9.614	-5.000	3.825	0.005	0.005
Subtotal pressures	122.033	64.502	71.795	69.637	70.168
Identified savings	-41.532	-12.059	-8.989	-7.923	0.000
Funding changes	-46.460	10.066	0.000	0.000	0.000
Council tax changes	-34.041	-17.787	-16.420	-16.915	-17.423
Forecast Gap (Surplus)/Deficit	0.000	44.722	46.386	44.800	52.744

2.6. The gap in 2025-26 is substantially being driven by the elements set out in the table below. Further details of MTFS assumptions are also provided below.

Table 2: Commentary on 2025-26 MTFS pressure assumptions

	2025-26 £m	Detail
Economic and inflationary pressures	24.044	Pay assumed at 3% for 2025-26 equates to £10m, price inflation includes £8.3m Adult Social Care, £3.7m Children's Services, £3.6m CES.
Legislative requirements	7.850	£5.0m relates to Adult Social Care and £3.0m Children's Services pay and price market pressures (including National Living Wage).
Demand and demographic pressures	37.608	£6.1m relates to Adults demographic growth. £3.5m Children's Services demographic growth. £2.0m relates to waste tonnages. £25.5m held centrally as provision for anticipated service growth.
Council policy decisions	-5.000	Reversals of one-off growth provided in 2024-25.
Net total pressures	64.502	
Funding changes	10.066	Significant uncertainty exists around Government funding within the Settlement. Assumption that additional funding provided from the Final Settlement for 2024-25 is one-off.
Savings	-12.059	Existing savings built in for 2025-26.
Total	62.510	Pressures, saving and funding changes

2.7. A summary of budget growth and other changes currently incorporated in 2024-25 planning are shown in the table below by Department. (Revised net budgets following the departmental changes from the 18 March Employment Committee can be seen in [Appendix 1](#)).

Table 3: 2025-26 MTFs net budget by Department

	Adult Social Services £m	Children's Services £m	Community and Environmental Services £m	Strategy and Transformation £m	Chief Executive's Directorate £m	Finance £m	Total £m
Base Budget 2024-25	281.967	238.592	203.268	30.184	4.384	-230.646	527.748
Growth							
Economic / Inflationary	10.694	6.923	4.365	1.143	0.127	0.792	24.044
Legislative Requirements	5.000	3.000	0.050	-0.200	0.000	0.000	7.850
Demand / Demographic	6.100	3.500	2.508	0.000	0.000	25.500	37.608
NCC Policy	-2.000	-3.110	-0.600	-1.219	0.118	1.811	-5.000
Total Growth	19.794	10.313	6.323	-0.276	0.245	28.103	64.502
Savings	-7.400	-6.113	0.543	2.201	0.290	-1.580	-12.059
Funding changes	0.000	8.706	0.000	0.200	0.000	1.161	10.066
Base Budget 2025-26	294.360	251.497	210.134	32.310	4.919	-202.962	590.258

Funded by: Council Tax	-545.535
Collection Fund Surplus	0.000
Total	-545.535
Budget Gap	44.722

2.8. The key assumptions underpinning the forecast gap in the current MTFS position include:

- Planned savings of £70.503m being delivered over the MTFS period:

Table 4: Savings in MTFS by Department

	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2024-28 £m
Adult Social Services	-14.252	-7.400	-4.900	-2.600	-29.152
Children's Services	-9.775	-6.113	-7.449	-5.703	-29.040
Community and Environmental Services	-9.665	0.543	-0.240	0.400	-8.962
Strategy and Transformation	0.460	2.201	0.040	-0.020	2.681
Chief Executive's Directorate	-0.330	0.290	0.000	0.000	-0.040
Finance	-7.970	-1.580	3.560	0.000	-5.990
Savings total	-41.532	-12.059	-8.989	-7.923	-70.503

- Government funding will be broadly flat in 2025-26 (i.e. essentially a rollover of 2024-25 funding levels) with the additional funding provided at the Final Settlement currently assumed to be one-off. This assumption includes Settlement Funding (RSG, business rates), Rural Services Delivery Grant, Social Care Grant(s), Better Care Fund / improved Better Care Fund, Public Health Grant, and Services Grant.
- Cost pressures for 2025-26 including:
 - 3% for pay inflation in 2025-26 and each year thereafter.
 - Price inflation in line with contractual rates or CPI forecasts where appropriate totalling £15.7m in 2025-26. It should be noted that **the MTFS assumes a material reduction in inflationary pressures compared to the level provided for in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 Budgets.**
 - Demographic growth pressures for Adults, Childrens, Waste totalling £12.1m in 2025-26, plus a contingency **assumption of £25.5m for further pressures.** If identified pressures exceed this level, there will be a need to find equivalent additional savings to achieve a balanced Budget position for 2025-26. Equally however, if any of this provision is not required, it will enable the level of savings sought to be reduced.
- Increases in council tax over the MTFS period, including **an assumed 2.99% increase in 2025-26 for planning purposes** as agreed by Full Council in February 2024 and shown in the following table. It should be noted that **every 1% change in council tax assumptions increases or decreases the budget gap by approximately £5.3m in 2025-26.**

Table 5: MTFS council tax assumptions

2.9. The council tax assumptions shown are those agreed by Full Council in February 2024.

	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Council tax increase	-10.541	-10.965	-11.295	-11.635
Council tax collection fund	3.295	0.000	0.000	0.000
Council tax base	-5.245	-5.455	-5.620	-5.789
Council tax ASC precept	-5.297	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total	-17.788	-16.420	-16.914	-17.423

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Band D %	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%
ASC Precept % ²	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Tax base % change assumption	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%

Second Homes Premium

2.10. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 allows billing authorities to charge an additional premium of 100 per cent on a property which is substantially furnished and where there is no resident (i.e., second homes, referred to in the Act as 'dwellings occupied periodically').

2.11. The billing authority will exercise their own judgment as to whether to apply a premium and at what level (up to 100 per cent). Most of the District councils in Norfolk have already decided to apply the second homes premium from 2025-26. The premium will provide councils with the flexibility to access additional revenue. Under council tax regulations, income generated from the premium would be shared between those bodies which charge council tax, in line with the proportional split of total council tax. The opportunity to charge a second homes council tax premium therefore has the potential to generate significant additional income for all organisations in Norfolk which charge council tax.

2.12. Additional council tax raised from the second homes premium in 2025-26 could make a material difference to the Council's financial position for 2025-26 onwards. However, until District decisions about implementation and exemptions, and (most importantly) the impact on Districts forecast tax base for the year are known, there is a high degree of uncertainty about the actual level of additional income that the premium would generate. The premium is ultimately intended to deliver behaviour change, and it is unclear to what extent this will be achieved, and over what timeframe.

² Decisions about the Precept offer are made annually by Government and there is currently no indication on levels for 2025-26 onwards.

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2.13. It is also unclear at this stage what assumptions Government may make within the 2025-26 settlement in terms of the additional income they expect councils to generate. It is possible that Government may incorporate these estimates within the settlement model and therefore it would be prudent for County to be cautious about the ability to rely on this income at this stage. Accordingly, the County Council has currently made no assumptions about additional income from second homes in the 2025-26 Budget planning / MTFs.

2.14. Taking these assumptions into account, the forecast net budget (before new savings) within the approved MTFs is shown below.

Table 6: MTFs Net Budget by Department

	2024-25 £m	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Adult Social Services	281.967	294.360	311.305	331.350	353.638
Children's Services	238.592	251.497	255.582	261.536	273.373
Community and Environmental Services	203.268	210.134	216.546	223.622	230.417
Strategy and Transformation	30.184	32.310	33.087	34.232	35.431
Chief Executive's Directorate	4.384	4.919	5.177	5.320	5.468
Finance	-230.646	-202.962	-168.634	-141.283	-113.382
Total Net Budget	527.748	590.258	653.064	714.778	784.945
Council Tax	-527.748	-545.535	-561.955	-578.870	-596.293
Budget Gap (cumulative)	0.000	44.722	91.108	135.908	188.651

3. Proposals

3.1. The following principles for 2025-26 budget setting are proposed:

- **Two rounds of Budget Challenge** (initial proposals in late June / early July and detailed proposals in September).
- **Allocation of the £44.722m saving target** on analysis of a “controllable spend” approach (see section 3.5) consistent with previous years.
- **Budget planning to cover the period 2025-26 to 2028-29** (extending the current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) by one year).
- To closely scrutinise any requests for additions to the Capital Programme for 2025-26 requiring additional borrowing to consider the value for money of proposals and assess their impact on the affordability of the revenue budget and MTFs, ensuring that borrowing levels are maintained within appropriate prudent limits and the revenue budget remains robust.

- Select Committees to have a role as part of the budget-setting process, considering areas for savings in July 2024 and commenting on detailed proposals in November 2024.
- Final decisions about the 2025-26 Budget to be taken in February 2025 in line with the budget setting timetable as set out below.

3.2. It is proposed that the approach to budget development should include:

- A review of all current pressures with a view to reducing the level required, which will include a process to challenge, understand, and approve all growth within 2025-26 Budget planning;
- A requirement that a business case is submitted for requests to access the £25.5m growth provision held corporately and that this will be subject to a prioritisation process as part of Budget Challenge;
- A review of all earmarked revenue reserves with a view to releasing funding where possible (noting that this would provide a one-off gain which would impact on the future year gap);
- A review of the Council's commercial opportunities, including scope to achieve increased income;
- A review to consider the scope to extend existing saving proposals;
- Identification of new savings against the minimum target of £45m to enable Member choice;
- Consideration of opportunities for greater integration between performance reporting, business planning, and budget development; and
- Consideration of the impact and budget requirements in relation to progress towards the [County Deal](#).

3.3. It should be noted that the changes during the budget setting process may result in the saving targets currently allocated to Services being revised (and potentially materially increased) in the event that further pressures or income changes arise. Options to address any shortfall in savings to close the 2025-26 Budget gap will ultimately include:

- Government providing additional funding;
- Corporate / centrally identified savings opportunities;
- The removal or mitigation of currently identified budget pressures; and
- Service departments identifying further savings.

3.4. The Budget agreed in February 2024 included a high level timetable for the 2025-26 budget process. The detailed timescales for internal budget planning activity will be confirmed following approval of the proposed approach by May Cabinet. The Budget process will also be informed through the year by any Government Budget announcements, Spending Reviews or other fiscal events, and Local Government Settlement, as well as any progress on reforms such as the Funding Review. The specific timing for these is currently unknown.

Table 7: Proposed Budget setting timetable 2025-26

2025-26 Proposed	Time frame
Cabinet review of the financial planning position for 2025-26 – including formal allocation of targets	8 May 2024
Scrutiny Committee	TBC May 2024
Select Committee input to development of 2025-26 Budget – strategy	TBC 2024
Review of budget pressures and development of budget strategy and detailed savings proposals 2025-29 incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Challenge 1 (TBC June / July) – context / strategy / approach / outline proposals Budget Challenge 2 (September) – detail and final proposals 	June to September 2024
Cabinet approve final proposals for public consultation	7 October 2024
Scrutiny Committee	TBC October 2024
Public consultation on 2025-26 Budget proposals, council tax and adult social care precept	Late October to mid December 2024
Select Committee input to development of 2025-26 Budget – comments on specific proposals	TBC November 2024
<i>Government Autumn Statement</i>	<i>TBC October / November 2024</i>
<i>Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced including provisional council tax and precept arrangements</i>	<i>TBC December 2024</i>
Cabinet considers outcomes of service and financial planning, EQIA and consultation feedback and agrees revenue budget and capital programme recommendations to County Council	27 January 2025
Confirmation of District Council tax base and Business Rate forecasts	31 January 2025
<i>Final Local Government Finance Settlement</i>	<i>TBC January / February 2025</i>
Scrutiny Committee 2025-26 Budget scrutiny	TBC February 2025
County Council agrees Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-26 to 2028-29, revenue budget, capital programme and level of council tax for 2025-26	TBC February 2025

3.5. In respect of the allocation of 2025-26 savings, it is proposed to:

1. **Seek to deliver efficiency savings via a target of 3% applied to support services.** This approach recognises that work has been undertaken to design a corporate centre function with the right capability and capacity to support the wider organisation. It would be inconsistent with the overall rationale if this newly established function were to be diminished through the application of an arbitrary budget target. However it is also recognised that it is appropriate to continue to expect these

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services to seek to deliver continuous improvement and value for money. The application of a 3% target recognises the challenge for the corporate centre to be more efficient in this context.

2. **Allocation of the remaining savings requirement across the front line departments**, based on applying the approach adopted in previous years. This is based on exclusion of “non controllable” spend, and ringfenced budgets, such as Schools, and capital financing items and then allocating a target based on the overall proportion of the controllable budget.
3. Existing departmental budget savings from previous budget rounds have been deducted from the savings requirement to produce the **new savings target** for each department. This seeks to address forecast future year budget gaps, with the aspiration to achieve a balanced position over the whole MTFS while ensuring any savings a department proposes for future years are recognised in that future year’s target setting rather than being “lost”; any additional pressures which arise are applied in the same ratio; and any one-off savings come back in the future year targets for that department.

3.6. This renders the following saving targets, representing the minimum savings level required to enable Member choice within the budget setting process for 2025-26:

Table 8: Allocation of Saving Target by Department

	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m	Total MTFS saving target £m
Adult Social Care	19.500	22.750	21.750	24.250	88.250
Children's Services	8.500	7.250	7.250	13.000	36.000
Communities and Environment	2.750	2.000	1.750	1.750	8.250
Infrastructure	9.250	9.500	9.000	8.500	36.250
Fire and Rescue	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	6.000
Strategy and Transformation	1.500	1.500	1.500	1.500	6.000
Chief Executive's Directorate	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	1.000
Finance	1.500	1.750	1.750	2.000	7.000
Total	44.750	46.500	44.750	52.750	188.750

3.7. The allocation of savings targets has used the new departmental structure from the Employment Committee of 18 March 2024. Future reporting of savings delivery and departmental budget breakdowns will be based on the new structure.

3.8. The saving targets in Table 8 reflect the savings currently forecast to be required to deliver a balanced budget over the whole MTFs period. It should be noted that to the extent budget gaps remain for future years following the conclusion of the 2025-26 budget process, these will be reallocated as new targets for services in future year budget rounds and individual departmental targets could therefore be adjusted at that point.

3.9. As previously highlighted, the Council is not in a position to be able to remove or reverse any of the saving proposals agreed as part of the 2024-25 budget, including those savings which are due for implementation during 2025-26. The total savings requirement including both the existing savings and new savings target will need to be delivered to close the 2025-26 budget gap. If a department is not in a position to deliver existing savings, replacement savings of the same amount will need to be included by that department in the 2025-26 budget.

Table 9: Existing Savings, New Savings Target and Total Savings Requirement by Department

	2025-26 existing savings³ £m	2025-26 new savings target £m	2025-26 total savings requirement £m
Adult Social Care	8.000	19.500	27.500
Children's Services	6.113	8.500	14.613
Communities and Environment	-0.687	2.750	2.063
Infrastructure	0.087	9.250	9.337
Fire and Rescue	0.200	1.500	1.700
Strategy and Transformation	-2.201	1.500	-0.701
Chief Executive's Directorate	-0.290	0.250	-0.040
Finance	0.837	1.500	2.337
Total	12.059	44.750	56.809

³ Negative values represent the reversal of one-off saving proposals, including use of reserves, from prior years.

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Table 10: Total Savings Requirement to be delivered over MTFS (including new targets and previously identified proposals)

	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m	Total MTFS savings requirement £m
Adult Social Care	27.500	27.650	24.350	24.250	103.750
Children's Services	14.613	14.699	12.953	13.000	55.264
Communities and Environment	2.063	2.020	1.750	1.750	7.584
Infrastructure	9.337	9.720	8.600	8.500	36.158
Fire and Rescue	1.700	1.500	1.500	1.500	6.200
Strategy and Transformation	-0.701	1.460	1.520	1.500	3.779
Chief Executive's Directorate	-0.040	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.710
Finance	2.337	1.990	1.750	2.000	8.077
Total	56.809	59.289	52.673	52.750	221.522

4. Impact of the Proposal

4.1. This paper sets out an outline timetable and approach to the Council's budget planning process for 2025-26, while recognising that significant risks and uncertainties remain. The proposals in this report are intended to:

- set the context for service financial planning for the year to come;
- provide a robust approach to tackling the budget gap forecast for the whole MTFS period;
- assist the Council in managing the continuing significant uncertainty around local authority funding including funding reform while providing sufficient flexibility to respond to any changes required; and
- contribute to the Council setting a balanced budget for 2025-26.

5. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

5.1. In the context of continuing significant financial pressures and delays to Government plans for funding reform, it remains critical that the Council has a robust approach to budget setting and the identification of saving proposals. After more than a decade of savings delivery, the ability to continue to identify achievable savings at the scale required is becoming increasingly challenged. The preparation of a balanced budget for 2025-26 is key to ensuring that the necessary resources are available to continue to progress with the implementation of the Council's key strategic ambitions, as well as the delivery of crucial day to day services.

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- 5.2. It therefore remains essential 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. Although funding reform plans have been delayed, it is still important that Government focuses on this issue and provides guidance on the direction of travel for reforms, financial planning assumptions, and indicative funding allocations for the medium term, as soon as possible.
- 5.3. The size of the budget gap forecast for 2025-26 is such that there is a risk that the Council will be obliged to consider reductions in service levels. As a result it is important that the process of identifying, and consulting on, savings proposals is undertaken as soon as possible and in particular that a full suite of proposals is brought forward for Cabinet to consider in October. This will provide adequate time for consultation and engagement work around saving proposals, which should, in turn, support effective mobilisation, implementation and delivery of any proposals that are ultimately agreed to provide a full year saving for 2025-26.
- 5.4. The Council's planning within the MTFS forecast is based on the position agreed in February 2024 and it is important to note that this will be kept under review throughout the 2025-26 Budget setting process, particularly in the event that further information about funding becomes available. It nevertheless remains prudent to establish a process to begin planning for savings at the level required to close the underlying gap identified in February 2024.
- 5.5. The proposals in the report are intended to reflect a proportionate response to the challenges and uncertainties present in the 2025-26 planning process and will ultimately support the Council to develop a robust budget for the year.

6. Alternative Options

- 6.1. This report sets out a framework for developing detailed saving proposals for 2025-26 and at this stage no proposals have been agreed, meaning that a range of alternative options remain open.
- 6.2. 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 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.
 - Changing assumptions within the MTFS (including the level of council tax assumed for planning purposes) and therefore varying the level of savings sought. **Every 1% change in the level of council tax (or ASC precept)**

would equate to approximately +/- £5.3m of savings to be identified as part of the 2025-26 Budget.

6.3. The planning context for the Council will be updated if further information becomes available. Final decisions about the overall shape of the 2025-26 Budget, savings, and council tax will not be made until February 2025.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Financial implications are discussed in detail throughout this report, which sets out the proposed indicative savings targets which will need to be found by each department to contribute to closing the 2025-26 and future year budget gap, subject to formal approval by Full Council in February 2025. The proposals in the report will require services to identify further significant savings to be delivered against current budget levels. The experience of budget setting in recent years has demonstrated that the scope to achieve savings at the level required is becoming increasingly challenging in the context of service delivery expectations, and existing saving programmes. It should also be noted that there is an increased level of risk following actions required (including use of reserves) to deliver a balanced budget in 2023-24, as there is reduced flexibility within the overall finances as a result. Therefore close monitoring and tight financial control will be required in 2024-25 to mitigate any risk of increasing the budget gap, which would have a knock on impact for the 2025-26 budget. As previously highlighted, there remains a risk that the Council will be obliged to consider reductions in service levels, and it is therefore crucial that proposals to deliver the full £44.750m savings target are identified in full for consideration by Cabinet in October.

7.2. The Council is legally required to set a balanced Budget annually and should plan to achieve this using a prudent set of assumptions. However, Cabinet could choose to vary the allocation of indicative targets between directorates, or to establish an alternative approach to identifying savings. Taking into account the savings already planned for 2024-25 and future years, the scale of the budget gap and savings required are such that if the Council is required to continue to identify and deliver savings at this level there remains a risk that this could threaten the Council's ability to continue to fully deliver its statutory responsibilities. As such the Government's response and decisions about Council funding in 2025-26 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 level of funding needed in recognition of the importance and costs of providing social care, and to adequately fund local authorities to provide these and other vital services. In spite of improvements in recent settlements, fundamentally there remains an urgent need for a larger quantum of funding to be provided to local government to deliver a sustainable operating environment for future years.

7.3. Work to deliver additional Government funding could therefore have an impact on the overall budget gap to be addressed. Equally, in the event that future funding allocations or reform sees resources shifted away from shire counties, the Council's forecast gap for 2025-26 or future years could increase. At this point, Government has not confirmed details of the proposed approach or timescales for consultation on funding reform, but they are not anticipated until 2026-27 at the earliest. Many key assumptions about 2025-26 funding remain to be confirmed and should be considered a key area of risk.

7.4. 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 2025-26 emerge through budget planning, there may be a requirement to revisit the indicative saving targets.

8. Resource Implications

8.1. **Staff:** There are no direct implications arising from this report although there is a potential that staffing implications may be linked to specific saving proposals developed. These will be identified as they arise later in the budget planning process.

8.2. **Property:** There are no 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.

8.3. **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.

9. Other Implications

9.1. **Legal Implications:** This report sets out a process that will enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2025-26 in line with statutory requirements, including those relating to setting council tax, and undertaking public consultation.

9.2. **Human Rights implications:** No specific human rights implications have been identified.

9.3. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):** Any saving proposals with an impact on service delivery will require public consultation, and an Equality Impact Assessment of all proposals will need to be completed as part of budget-setting in due course. The results of public consultation and the findings of all EqIAs will be presented to Cabinet in January 2025 in order to inform budget recommendations to County Council.

9.4. No specific EqIA has been undertaken in respect of this report, although the EqIA in relation to the 2024-25 Budget can be found as part of the [budget papers considered in February 2024](#).

9.5. **Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):** None identified.

9.6. **Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):** None identified.

9.7. **Sustainability implications (where appropriate):** There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report although existing 2024-25 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. Further details are set out in the [Climate Strategy](#). Ultimately sustainability issues and any associated financial implications in relation to either new 2025-26 proposals, or activities developed during 2024-25, will need to be fully considered once such initiatives are finalised, and incorporated as part of budget setting in February 2025.

9.8. **Any other implications:** Significant issues, risks, assumptions and implications have been set out throughout the report.

10. Risk Implications/Assessment

10.1. Significant risks have been identified throughout this report. Risks in respect of the MTFS were also set out within the February 2024 report to Full Council.

10.2. A number of significant uncertainties remain which could have an impact on the overall scale of the budget gap to be addressed in 2025-26, linked to ongoing uncertainty around local government (and wider public sector finances) including:

- further “cost of living” pressures and the wider economic impacts, including impact on demand for services;
- implications of higher interest rates for borrowing costs across both the revenue and capital budgets;
- implications of increases in the National Living Wage;
- the progress of funding reforms (previously the Fair Funding Review) now likely to be developed for implementation in 2026-27 at the earliest;
- Government decisions about the council tax referendum limit or further ASC precept flexibilities in 2025-26 and beyond;
- the need for a long-term financial settlement for local government;
- delivery of other reforms to local government funding including further details of the approach to Adult Social Care reforms to implement the cap on care costs, and changes to other funding streams;
- progress on delivery of the Safety Valve programme and implementation of Local First Inclusion within Children’s Services;

<https://norfolkcounty.sharepoint.com/sites/GOVDR-DemocraticServices/CommitteeSupport/current/Cabinet/Agenda/2024/240508/13 Strategic and Financial Planning - Saving targets.docx>

- progress of various elements of Government policy including levelling up, delivery of the County Deal.

10.3. 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:

- RM001 – Infrastructure funding requirements
- RM006 – Service delivery – The potential risk of failure to deliver our services within the resources available for the period 2023-24 to the end of 2024-25.
- RM022b – Replacement EU Funding for Economic Growth
- RM031 – NCC Funded Children's Services Overspend due to demand pressure
- RM035 – Adverse impact of significant and abnormal levels of inflationary pressure on revenue and capital budgets
- RM039 – Financial, Staffing & Market Stability impacts due to implementation of Social Care Reform (now October 2025)
- RM042 – Increasing Challenges to Maintaining Financial Resilience
- RM043 - High Needs Block Deficit cannot be resolved

Further details of all corporate risks, including those outlined above, can be found in Appendix C of the [April 2024 Risk Management report to Cabinet](#) (item 15). 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.

11. Select Committee comments

11.1. Select Committees provided commentary and input to the 2024-25 Budget process during budget development, and this was reported to Cabinet at various stages of the process. No specific input has been sought from Select Committees in respect of this report, however Select Committees are expected to again have the opportunity to comment when they consider the implications of 2025-26 budget setting for the service areas within their remit when they meet during the year as set out in the proposed timetable.

12. Recommendations

12.1. Cabinet is recommended:

- 1. To consider the overall budget gap of £135.908m included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set by Full Council in February 2024, and agree:**

<https://norfolkcounty.sharepoint.com/sites/GOVDR-DemocraticServices/CommitteeSupport/current/Cabinet/Agenda/2024/240508/13 Strategic and Financial Planning - Saving targets.docx>

- a. the gap of £44.722m to be closed for 2025-26; and
 - b. the extension of the MTFS by a further year (to 2028-29), adding a further £52.744m to the gap and resulting in additional pressure assumptions to be addressed and leading to an overall gap for planning purposes of £188.652m over the next four years. (Section 2).
2. To review the key budget risks and uncertainties as set out in this report. (Section 10).
3. To consider the principles of the proposed approach to budget setting for 2025-26, noting that there may be a need for flexibility within both the process itself and the assumptions applied, and agree:
- a. the process and indicative timetable set out in Section 3, including the proposed consultation process for 2025-26.
 - b. that there should be a detailed review of cost pressures and growth already provided within the Budget (including 2024-25 inflation provisions) against actual costs experienced to identify any opportunities for budget reduction.
 - c. the minimum savings targets allocated to each Department to be found (Table 8), and that these will be kept under review throughout the budget process.
4. To approve the initial budget virements for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix 1, reflecting budget transfers for whole services between departments as a result of the Employment Committee of 18 March 2024, while noting the virements do not change the overall Council Budget.

13. Background Papers

13.1. Background papers relevant to this report include:

[Norfolk County Council Revenue and Capital Budget 2024-25 to 2027-28, County Council 20/02/2024, agenda item 5](#)

[Better Together, for Norfolk](#)

[Corporate Delivery Plan](#) and [Corporate Delivery Plan – Annual Report 2022-2023, Cabinet 10/05/2023, agenda item 11](#)

[Risk Management, Cabinet 08/04/2024, agenda item 15](#)

[Norfolk County Council Climate Strategy](#)

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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 – 2024-25 Budget reconciliation

The following tables provide a summary of the adjustments between the Net Budget position presented to County Council in February 2024, and the Net Budget position arising from the Employment Committee of 18 March 2024 which will form the basis for 2024-25 monitoring in future reporting to Cabinet. These adjustments **do not change the overall County Council Budget for 2024-25**.

	Adult Social Services £m	Children's Services £m	CES £m	Communities and Environment £m	Infrastructure £m	Fire and Rescue £m	Strategy and Transformation £m	Chief Executive's Directorate £m	Finance £m	Total £m
Net Budget 2024-25 as per Full Council February 2024	281.967	238.592	203.268	-	-	-	30.184	4.384	-230.646	527.748
Adjustments										
Communities and Environment			-20.896	20.896						0.000
Infrastructure			-145.047		145.047					0.000
Fire			-36.017			36.017				0.000
Procurement			-1.308						1.308	0.000
Total 2024-25 c/f below	281.967	238.592	-	20.896	145.047	36.017	30.184	4.384	-229.339	527.748

Net Budget	Adult Social Services £m	Children's Services £m	Communities and Environment £m	Infrastructure £m	Fire and Rescue £m	Strategy and Transformation £m	Chief Executive's Directorate £m	Finance £m	Total £m
2024-25 (adjusted)	281.967	238.592	20.896	145.047	36.017	30.184	4.384	-229.339	527.748
2025-26	294.360	251.497	22.207	149.839	36.590	32.310	4.919	-201.464	590.258
2026-27	311.305	255.582	23.170	154.245	37.583	33.087	5.177	-167.086	653.064
2027-28	331.350	261.536	24.043	159.375	38.605	34.232	5.320	-139.684	714.778

The above table represents the “do nothing” scenario in relation to the MTFS position approved by County Council in February 2024. In other words, it shows the impact of forecast cost pressures for the period to 2027-28, reconciled to the new departmental structure approved by Employment Committee. In practice, additional savings will need to be developed through the 2025-26 Budget process and incorporated into the above MTFS to deliver a balanced budget position.