

Council

Date: **Tuesday 27 May 2014**

Time: **10:00am**

Venue: **Council Chamber, County Hall, Norwich**

Supplementary Agenda

8. Leader's Report

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Norfolk County Council Annual Review 2013 – 14

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Annual Review 2013-2014

Foreword

The May 2013 county council elections marked a critical turning point in how Norfolk's County Council was governed. Norfolk's electors chose not to put any political party in overall control, making it necessary for parties of different colours, policies and persuasions to come together to form a working administration in the interests of the people they were elected to serve.

This is just what happened and through the democratic will of the council, a Labour/Liberal Democrat administration came into being on 24 May 2013, voted in with the active support of another two of the three other main parties and the (then just one) independent councillor. So right from the outset, the 2013/14 county council year promised to be a remarkable one, characterised by radical change, and it so it has proven to be.

I am proud that throughout the whole year the alliance has held firm and managed to weather the storms that blew in and it has also achieved genuine and demonstrable progress on its top priorities for Norfolk people - real jobs, good infrastructure and excellence in education.

Early on in our administration, we set to work to develop and agree a new vision for the council and streamline and sharpen its focus around three clear priorities.

We arrived at this vision and these priorities collaboratively. Early in the summer we engaged others through a series of roundtable discussions and then we consulted Norfolk people widely during the course of the 'Norfolk – Putting People First' budget consultation project.

We did not choose the title for that consultation lightly, far from it, for the entire rationale that has driven our administration's work over the past year has been to do just that – to put Norfolk People First. In February this year, the council confirmed both the vision and the priorities we consulted on and they now form the framework for the Council Plan. They are as follows:

Vision

Our vision for Norfolk is for everyone to succeed and fulfil their potential. By putting people first, we can achieve a better, safer future, based on education, economic success and listening to local communities.



Our priorities are:

Excellence in education – we will champion our children and young people's right to an excellent education, training and preparation for employment because we believe they have the talents and ability to compete with the best. We firmly believe that every single child matters.

Real jobs – we will promote employment that offers security, opportunities and a good level of pay. We want real sustainable jobs available throughout Norfolk.

Good infrastructure – we will make Norfolk a place where businesses can succeed and grow. We will promote improvements to our transport and technology infrastructure, to make Norfolk a great place to do business.

This does not mean that we aren't also focused on the many other vital areas of service we are responsible for, or for doing our best to meet the needs of vulnerable people now, and in the future. But as I said in the introduction to 'Putting People First, we firmly believe that by giving specific priority to these three areas (which we did not believe had been given sufficient priority over past years), we could achieve the best results for Norfolk people. Throughout the past year, our administration has tried to appeal to people's best hopes, rather than their worst fears.

This review is not, and is not intended to be comprehensive. County councillors have had access to a great deal of information over the past year they can draw on themselves – not least of which has been in the form of regular reports through panels etc. Instead, it focuses on the differences, positive and sometimes, on occasion, not so positive, this council has made to Norfolk people over the past year, starting with its new priorities. It also looks ahead to some of the challenges that lie ahead.

Our alliance promised that a new spirit of constructiveness, openness and transparency would be a hallmark of its work and it is in that spirit that I have produced this annual review report for the county council. To my mind, it is only right and proper that the Council Leader should report back annually to his or her colleagues. That way, and in the same spirit, they can consider and reflect on what has taken place and perhaps more importantly, look ahead to some of opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

The new committee system of governance now coming into being means in 2014/15 and for the following four years at least, accountability for decisions is much broader and even more open because making decisions, setting budgets and agreeing priorities will be a matter for all 84 county councillors. However, it is my hope that an annual report from the Council Leader will in future be a matter of course and that next May, councillors will once again have the opportunity of considering collectively what they have achieved together for Norfolk people, and the challenges that still lie ahead.



George Nobbs

Leader Norfolk County Council
May 2014



Annual Review 2013- 2014

Real jobs

We made this a top priority. We have put extra emphasis and effort into building and sustaining strong partnerships with other agencies in and around the jobs and skills agendas. We have developed much stronger working relationships between our economic development team and Suffolk County Council's so between us we can help ensure that both counties reap the best benefits possible from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and future Government funding – so many of our issues are common and we share a common border and many of the same infrastructure needs. So we have not been afraid to lead from the front when it comes to pushing Norfolk's interests forward and can report real progress on this priority.

Key highlights include:

- **A clear strategy for growth** - in March this year NALEP submitted to Government its Strategic Economic Plan for Norfolk and Suffolk. We have worked closely with Suffolk colleagues to support its content and production and negotiations are now underway with Government officials, prior to a 'Growth Deal' being done in early July. We need that Deal to be good for Norfolk because it will provide access to Government funding for infrastructure and economic growth. NALEP has bid for some £430m of funding for the six year period 2015-21, largely for transport infrastructure (the money is virtually all capital).

We are now working with local council partners and the LEP to refresh Norfolk's economic growth strategy and focus it on higher value jobs, growth and increased productivity. Its findings will come before members of the September Economic Development Sub-Committee in the coming year.

- **France (Channel) England Programme** - we succeeded in our bid to manage the 350m euros cross border Interreg programme France (Channel) England, which covers an area from Norfolk to Cornwall and Pas de Calais to Finistère in France. We are the first English County Council to become a programme manager for a European territorial programme. The programme is open to all relevant agencies in the territory covered, but our management of the programme itself creates 30 highly skilled jobs – with the core team in Norfolk. It also demonstrates the confidence that others have in our ability to manage such a programme efficiently.

- **Apprenticeships success – bucking the national trend**

In December we were able to report that, through continuing hard work, the Apprenticeships for Norfolk Fund had reached its target - 400 new apprenticeships figure nine months ahead of schedule. This bucked the national trend for apprenticeships recruitment. We appointed Richard Bridgeman, a successful Thetford-based businessman, as our Apprenticeship Champion to keep up the pressure for new places and keep the issue on people's agendas. In July this year, we will launch a new apprenticeship scheme run in partnership between Adult Education and Swarm apprenticeships which will create a further 36 apprenticeships that will run for 14 months giving young people workplace experience and the chance to acquire a Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship in Enterprise Skills.

- **Expanded Hethel Engineering Centre**

The Hethel Engineering Centre has continued to grow from strength to strength and over the past twelve months has effectively doubled in size to meet growing demand. The latest expansion creates 16 new offices and workshop incubation spaces for engineering companies, allowing them to scale up their production and grow their manufacturing capacity. Importantly, it is expected to create a further 340 value jobs.

- **Assisted Area Status for Great Yarmouth**

We ensured that NCC played a key role in developing and making the case for Great Yarmouth (and Lowestoft) to be awarded Assisted Area Status which it now has. This is a real boost to the area and gives added impetus to the extensive work we have been doing to attract investment associated with the energy sector. We have invested £2.75m from the Norfolk Infrastructure Fund for regeneration and land assembly at South Denes in Great Yarmouth. This is a site central to the Great Yarmouth Enterprise Zone and will help spearhead the growth in renewable energy-related jobs. Nearly 500 jobs have been created in the Enterprise Zone and energy businesses located elsewhere are also growing.

- **Helping build the profile and business impact of the world class Norwich Research Park**

The continued growth and development of the Park is very important to the economic futures of both Norwich and Norfolk. We have agreed to invest £40k a year for three years in a grant programme for businesses. The Norwich Research Park is running the programme which will help commercialise the world class research carried out there. Our investment, added to that provided by the New Anglia LEP, South Norfolk Council and Norwich City Council, means we have helped draw down a £750k grant from the Biological and Biotechnological Science Research Council for Norfolk businesses in the life sciences and agri-tech sectors.

- **Wider links for inward investment and trade** – Colleen Walker travelled to Jiangsu in China in March in her role as Cabinet Member for Economic Development, as part of continuing efforts by the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex to attract inward investment by science companies based in the province. The strong inter-governmental links established with Jiangsu are providing the councils with privileged access to key senior decision-makers.



Looking ahead

Skills and growth

The Growth Strategy looks for particular growth in sectors that support higher paid jobs – deliberately so. That is why we must ensure our economic development strategy and activities march hand in hand with those aimed at improving education and growing skills. However, we will continue to have a particular need to help our social and health care sector grow. We know it needs to do so to help us meet the long term needs of vulnerable older people in particular.

We all know skills levels in Norfolk are not as high as they should be, or that we want and need them to be, if more Norfolk children and young people are to achieve pole position for well paid and fulfilling jobs in current and emerging job markets.

Maximising investment from green energy

Norfolk is well placed to be at the forefront of the green energy revolution and reap the economic and environmental benefits and new inward investment this sector can bring. It is important that use our efforts and exploit any opportunity that comes our way to help this sector grow and develop here, rather than elsewhere. We will need to recognise that, in some areas, its continued growth and expansion is likely to be controversial and play a much stronger role in informing and engaging people about any of our own relevant plans and issues than we may have done before.





Excellence in education

Our new administration faced an immediate challenge in the form of a series of poor performance reports on Children's Services by Ofsted. In Children's Services, our work in education and support for school improvement were judged ineffective – which, when added to concerns in social care, created enormous pressure to turn things around with pace and urgency.

We made tackling these matters our very first priority and rolled up our sleeves accordingly because the stakes – the education, skills, safety and wellbeing of our children and young people - were simply too high and far too important to Norfolk people. This administration insisted on shining a bright light on the service and being open, honest and accepting of its demonstrable shortcomings with Members, staff and partners so, together, we could begin the work to put them right.

Key highlights include:

- **We have strengthened the managerial leadership and political oversight and scrutiny of Children's Services** and, together, completely re-focused it on delivering better outcomes. We appointed a Cabinet member with a specific portfolio for Education and Schools.
- **We have created a greater oversight on performance and a new framework for challenge across all sectors.** Strong performance management of the service – not just for money, but for achieving the outcomes we want for our children and young people is essential.
- **We have invested an extra £1.3m** to support school improvement and released another £10m from the Dedicated Schools Grant to support children with special educational needs, the majority of which is going directly to schools, via school clusters.
- **We maintained very sharp focus and performance oversight of the council's 'A Good School for Every Norfolk Learner' strategy and Norfolk to Good and Great programme**, which are showing dividends. It is a fact that a further 9,900 children and young people are now learning in schools classified by Ofsted as 'good' or 'outstanding' since the strategy was launched and we are seeing an impact in both primary and secondary sectors.
- **We have been innovative and creative about how we can support and encourage improved learning in other ways** - for example, our Raising Readers campaign and the recent decision to give every Norfolk child the opportunity of free access to our museums by joining the Children's University Scheme.
- **We have also worked hard to support and encourage young people's interest in, and knowledge of, the democratic process.** With our help and support, this year's Youth Parliament elections saw a record turnout of 48% of the 11-18 year olds eligible to vote.
- **We have also looked wider than Norfolk** because we are keen to learn from others and bring in new skills. For example, we brought in national leaders to support our school improvement work, such as David Woods, one of the pioneers behind the London Challenge.
- **We also launched a new Early Years strategy**, to make sure we are getting it right for children at the earliest opportunity and greater challenge in areas where children are struggling to achieve the expected levels of development,

Looking ahead

While the council is not responsible for running schools, we have used our influence to create a real momentum for change. We understand schools well, are challenging school leaders and focusing on a re-igniting governance programme. These things are creating a new sense of ambition with our partners for the value of education and its central role in economic prosperity.

We are confident that in the new committee arrangements we will continue this drive and minimise any chance of a performance dip through temporary loss of focus or changed political leadership arrangements. It is down to all of us, and especially the members of the new Children's Services Committee, to step up to the plate and ensure the green shoots of progress in schools' improvement continue to grow and blossom to the benefit of all our children and young people. That means Members and officers must maintain strong scrutiny and challenge of the work underway and continue to ensure strong and effective leadership of the service overall.

We are being bold in solving some of the very difficult challenges a rural county like ours presents working towards securing sustainable futures for rural schools. In a rural county like ours, which has 38 schools with fewer than 50 pupils, this is a real challenge and will continue to be so. There are a range of options available which we have been pursuing and will continue to pursue. We also continue to support the governing bodies of small schools. But getting the very best outcomes for each and every young person means the council will need to keep under focus the means of agreeing a sustainable future for our small rural schools because we all recognise the important role they play in maintaining vibrant rural communities.







Good infrastructure

We have made this one of our top priorities because for too long, Norfolk's infrastructure has been the poor relation when it came to Government recognition of the need, and thus the funding. We need major improvements in our transport and ICT infrastructure, in particular to support the long term growth and sustainability of our economy, necessary to help people and communities thrive. The very nature of the improvements necessary makes achieving our aspirations a long term and long haul (no pun intended) agenda, but in just twelve months we have made progress.

Key highlights include:

- **Government recognition of the strategic importance to Norfolk of the Norwich Northern Distributor Road** - The acceptance by Government that the Norwich Northern Distributor Road (NDR) is a scheme of **national** importance and as such, should be assessed through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) development approval process is a real step forward.

It recognises the benefits the NDR scheme offers to Norfolk, not just in terms of travel and traffic management, but also through its wider impact on supporting economic growth and development for a large part of the county. It means the NDR has cleared another hurdle and, through this fast-track approval process, is much better placed to becoming a reality within a shorter period of time.

- **Postwick Junction** - work has now begun to improve the Postwick junction with the southern bypass. This £19m scheme is a vital part of the new infrastructure Norfolk needs, because even on its own, it will unlock the economic and housing potential of the area. For example, based on the number of existing planning consents that can be implemented following the junction's upgrading, it is forecast to help support the creation of around 5,000 new jobs, including the expansion of Broadland Business Park and the creation of the Broadland Gate business area.
- **Keeping up the pressure for A47 improvements and revitalising the A47 Alliance** - we all know just how badly Norfolk needs the A47 to be upgraded. A long-standing A47 Alliance to lobby for the upgrade was in place, but we, and others including the local MPs with constituencies along the route, the New Anglia LEP and local authorities in Norfolk, Suffolk and Peterborough, thought it needed to be given more focus and energy to push it higher up the Government's transport agenda.

A new 'A47 - Gateway to Growth' prospectus sets out priorities for improvement from Peterborough and Wisbech to the A12 from Great Yarmouth to Lowestoft, the Alliance's proposed contribution to the development of a 'route-based strategy' and the short to medium term improvements necessary first to tackle congestion hotspots and inadequate junctions and make the route better and safer. We added our weight to the ministerial lobby and co-ordinated and helped produce an A47 Alliance Business Case brochure to use in doing so.

- **Rolling out faster broadband** - we kept this vital project on track and in just under a year, another 40,000 Norfolk homes and businesses had been given access to high-speed fibre broadband as part of the Better Broadband for Norfolk programme.

Looking ahead

Agreeing a long term strategy for the management of waste and rebuilding confidence and relationships

As a brand new administration we inherited the Willows project from the previous one and surely it must rank as one of the most controversial projects and poorly-handled decisions in the county council's history. Suffice it to say, we found ourselves legally contracted and tied in to an already controversial project that then saw promised (and considerable) Government financial support withdrawn mid-year and which, at the time of writing, has still to get a planning decision out of the Communities Secretary some two years after he called it in.

We need to reflect and learn from the collapsed Willows Energy from Waste project. We must use that learning to develop a new long term sustainable strategy for the management of Norfolk's waste - one that genuinely commands support from its local authority partners. We also have to recognise that the council's reputation has taken a hit and valued relations been damaged. We must act to rebuild and restore both and we all have a part to play in doing so. Importantly, we need to demonstrate that we are listening to local communities and taking decisions in an open and transparent fashion.

What we have done is to keep our promise to enable and open up wider council debate on the matter. We supported independent examinations of the project and published their reports for all to see. Through the new committee system, which we have worked tirelessly with colleagues to bring into being, we have also guaranteed that never again will a decision of this importance and financial magnitude be able to be taken without consideration and a vote that all 84 members take part in.

But we are where we are. We have terminated the contract for planning failure and through adroit budget planning in February, had already set aside £19m towards meeting compensation costs which the previous administration had made no provision for. More painful is the finding of the balance. We haven't shirked it, and council will decide where the closing of any final gap means we need to make changes to the overall budget.

Seeing through the NDR process

The examination in public of the NDR is about to get underway. The Government has set the process under which it is conducted. Our council has agreed the scheme and is its promoter. We must do all we can to keep our residents and partners well informed about what is happening and the long term benefits it has to offer.

The ever present challenge of maintaining over 6,000 miles of Norfolk roads

We will continue to face a constant battle to maintain our roads as well as we and many of our residents would like, because we simply do not have enough money to do so. Financial prospects for council funding are bleak and on top of that, a huge backlog has built up over many years and pressure on other services continues to grow. Norfolk is not alone in being in this position; it is a nationwide problem for highways authorities. However, it will continue to be a challenge, representing a budget tension that members will have to manage.

Realising for our taxpayers and local residents the benefits from the purchase of the RAF Coltishall site

The former administration purchased an exciting and valuable investment asset in the former RAF Coltishall site. We want to make it work for the benefit of the local neighbourhood, our economy and Norfolk's

taxpayers, generating income we can use to protect public service. People are anxious to see progress, the planning process is well underway, the plans are promising and the prospects at the time of writing appear excellent. The challenge in the coming year is to ensure we translate promise and prospect into reality and keep our strong relationship with the local community.

Keeping up the pressure for the A47 upgrade

We must keep up the pressure for upgrading the A47 and continue to campaign for, and promote, the A47 Alliance. At minimum, we want to see major upgrades to three of its key junctions.





Safeguarding and protecting children and young people

I highlighted earlier on in this report the swift action we took to strengthen the managerial leadership and capacity within Children's Services, starting with our appointment of Sheila Lock as Interim Director.

We didn't waste time arguing with the Ofsted judgements that said the safeguarding service and our services to children in public care were inadequate. We accepted it, recognised what they were telling the council and focused all our energies on turning things round. Our starting point was, and is, 'what is best for Norfolk's children and young people?'

We know it is a big journey but we have, over the past twelve months, put in place some of the critical foundation blocks to take us there. We have focused on getting the basics right, rigorously improving performance, leading and managing well and working with our partners. We know and are seeing evidence that this approach is delivering improvement and this is being supported by external scrutiny in the form of our more recent reviews. County councillors have focused on asking the question 'would this be good enough for our children' and challenging services to improve. This is particularly important in our work with those children who cannot live at home.

Key highlights include:

- **The Children's Service's Improvement Board and Plan** – chaired independently, working very effectively and keeping under close challenge and scrutiny the performance of a very robust service improvement plan
- **A refocused Safeguarding Board** – chaired independently and developing key priorities for us to work through as a Norfolk Partnership
- **The Peer Review** - we actively sought external review to help us improve and help us assess the direction of travel. That review evidenced signs that the service is now moving in the right direction to deliver improved results. We now face an Ofsted Integrated inspection which we have been preparing for. We hope that we will evidence enough improvement to gain Ofsted's confidence, and through Ofsted, Government confidence in our ability to provide an effective and continuously improving service to get better results for our children and young people.
- **Extra investment to boost social work capacity** - one of our earliest actions was to invest a further £5m over two years to make improvements in Children's Services. Some of this supported the recruitment of both experienced and new social workers to fill vacancies and manage an increasing workload. 30 agency workers were brought in to clear case backlogs, and 37 permanent new social workers have been recruited this year, with more already invited to interview.
- **Preventing more children and young people from having to come in care** - the improvement work underway has started to provide clear evidence that the actions we are taking to bring down the numbers of Looked after Children in Norfolk are slowing down what was a fast upward trajectory.

Looking ahead

The turnaround of safeguarding services for children is now moving in the right direction because our administration listened to the evidence, scrutinised performance and got on with dealing with the issues, rather than wasting time in challenging or denying the reality or putting our heads in the sand and hoping matters would go away or sort themselves out. It is really important in the new committee system that all Members keep their energies focused on moving forward and making improvements rather than looking back.

The Children's Plan we have developed with our partners focuses us on getting three things firmly embedded this year.

- Involving young people in the services we provide
- Restructuring our children's workforce, to provide earlier help much more locally
- Working more closely with our partners in Health to bring our budgets together so that we can be more effective and efficient

A key criterion to do this will be sustainable leadership for Children's Services. The current top leadership team in Children's Services is an extremely effective one, but comprised largely of interim appointments. Sheila Lock has agreed to stay as Interim Director until March 2015 to help ensure the effectiveness and stability of the managerial leadership arrangements going forward and put in place a more coherent and performance focused structure.

Members shouldn't underestimate just how important it is to attract and recruit the very best people to the new roles when advertised and to put in all the necessary effort to make that happen. It is a fact that such skills are very much at a premium in local government and many councils are also needing to recruit.







Adult social care

The past twelve months have moved us further towards the closer integration of our adult social care services and those of the NHS. We have faced some difficult issues and managed them, including some that seemed to us to have been previously ducked and put in the 'too difficult' box, such as the important matter of deciding the future of Herondale and ending uncertainty for its vulnerable residents and staff.

Key highlights include:

- **Decisive action to meet concerns in adult mental health services** - since 2008, mental health services for adults aged 18 to 65 have been provided on the County Council's behalf by the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT). During the course of this year, it became very clear to us, and increasingly to the Trust, that users of mental health services wanted and needed improvement. We agreed that a new model of service would deliver these best and fastest and that the Council needed to lead this, applying its leadership and expertise in social care. So in January, we took the decision to bring back in-house the social care mental health service for adults of working age. Our plan will see a new model for social care in mental health, in line with arrangements for social care in community and acute trusts. It will create a specialist social care service, working in partnership with the health services, aimed at delivering much better results for the people who need such care and support and greater emphasis on promoting individual choice and independence, with tailored support through personal budgets.
- **Building our integrated services with the NHS** - this year we have reached agreement with Norfolk Community Health and Care to establish a joint management structure to help us to create really seamless community health and care services which are strongly connected to primary care. This will build on our existing local integrated working which is all underpinned by our drive to provide personalised and efficient care with our health service colleagues
- **Independence Matters** - we have established the largest social enterprise of its kind in the UK, to provide services to a wide range of people, including older people and adults with dementia, learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health problems. Our new social enterprise - Independence Matters - sees staff and users with more control over the way the service operates and grows to meet people's needs. Its set-up recognises that they are the best people to know what developments are needed and to come up with new ways of meeting them. It is an innovative solution we believe will ensure the future for the personal care and support services we used to provide ourselves, as well as making them more flexible and responsive to meet user need.
- **Agreeing to pool resources with our NHS colleagues to get the best out of the Better Care Fund** - this year we had to agree with our partners - five Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) - a plan for spending Norfolk's share of the new Better Care Fund, (some £3.482m for the coming year). This hasn't been an easy task but through the excellent working relationships we have with our CCGs, including our integrated health and social care commissioning team, the process, while challenging, has been entirely constructive and produced a good result for Norfolk people.

The aim of the Government's Better Care Fund is to support health and social care organisations to improve local services and value for money by transforming the way they share information, staff, money and risk. In reality, despite the hype, there is little new money and the majority comes from existing health and social care budgets, but the fund does secure significant NHS funding for social care. However, with our NHS colleagues, we have used the opportunity provided by the BCF to agree single pooled fund arrangements – looking at how we use the money in the round. That way, we share accountability for making it work, we share risk and can make sure we genuinely use the Fund as a catalyst to transform even faster the way we work together to provide services, manage demand and improve outcomes.

- **Norsecare - improved services for dementia sufferers** - within our partnership with Norsecare, the first of the new specialist dementia care homes is now built and will be opening shortly in Gorleston, providing state of the art facilities for 88 people. This is a major achievement in the programme to transform residential care services we ran previously. With Norsecare, we have secured a partnership, with substantial Homes and Communities Agency funding, for a major development in Bowthorpe in Norwich for housing with care and dementia care services.



Looking ahead

Managing ever-rising demand in a time of shrinking budgets

We know that the demand on this service is increasing and set to do so even more over coming years. Further salami slicing of budgets is not the answer, and the council will need to integrate even more with the local NHS and, with them, reshape services to support people to stay independent and well-supported at home where possible. It will be vital to continue work to support communities to help connect vulnerable and isolated older people with volunteers and informal networks in their local areas.

Introduction of the Care Bill

The year ahead will see a major overhaul of the legislation underpinning social care, as the Care Bill becomes statute. The council will need to prepare for changes in its responsibilities which we expect to come in from April 2015. They include responsibilities to assess and provide information on care to a much wider group of people, to address new entitlements of carers to access services and to implement the new funding cap which will limit people's personal liabilities for care costs. This is complex and complicated change Members will want to be well informed about and to keep under close scrutiny. We can all expect the net result to be a big increase in service demand.

Securing quality care services

A whole series of nationally reported incidents from across the country, which have been horrific to see or read about, have brought the quality of care firmly to the nation's agenda and to ours. Since we are the largest commissioner of care in Norfolk, the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and the quality of care people receive needs to remain at the forefront of our thinking. This year we have revised our safeguarding processes and our quality framework to refresh how we set standards for care in Norfolk, monitor services and intervene when we need to.

It will be very important for all Members to keep the matter of the quality of care people receive at the forefront of their thinking. Earlier this year, we commissioned a peer review from the Local Government Association of our safeguarding of vulnerable adults to test our practice. We are pleased that the external reviewers assessed our safeguarding arrangements as sound and adults are safeguarded in Norfolk. However, we will be driving forwards improvements in this key area over the coming year, focusing on overhauling our Safeguarding Board and making sure we deliver the outcomes which people want. Progress will be reported to the Council on a regular basis.

Reshaping community health and care services

The council's plans to integrate services with the NHS to provide better services which keep people at home where possible are very ambitious but necessary if, at the same time, the council is to reduce the rising costs which make the current arrangements unaffordable.



Cultural services

We know how much our residents and visitors to Norfolk value and use our library, museums and Archive Centre services. We are proud that, despite the downward pressure on finances, innovation, leadership and hard work, this year has seen the service go from strength to strength with some spectacular results. Among other things, such results gain Norfolk further recognition for its expertise, innovation and flare in cultural services, helping win the confidence of important funders and other cultural institutions we would wish to work with.

Key highlights include:

- **Top performing library service** - the 2013 CIPFA library survey showed that, for the seventh year running, our Millennium Library attracted more visitors than any other library in the country.

Not only that, our entire Library Service is the most popular of all county authorities in terms of books and other items borrowed per head of population. In addition, we have managed our budget in such a way that we have not closed even one of the county's 47 libraries.

- **Roman Empire: Power & People** – in January this year, the Castle Museum and Art Gallery hosted Roman Empire: Power & People which brought to Norfolk the largest ever UK exhibition of Roman artefacts on loan from the British Museum - 160 stunning pieces in all. The exhibition's quality and presentation had people literally queuing round the block, setting record attendance levels. Our museum was one of only six regional museums allowed to host the exhibition and the fact we were able to borrow such significant treasures from the British Museum was both a real coup for Norfolk and a testament to the expertise and excellence of our Museums' Service and staff.
- **New Museums Development Foundation** - with our partners, we have set up a new fundraising foundation that could generate more than £100,000 a year for Norfolk's museums by allowing Gift Aid on Museum Passes and grants from charitable trusts and foundations.

By bringing in more revenue, we can help offset the impact of Government budget cuts and continue to invest in this loved and award-winning service to benefit more people now and in the future.

The additional money generated by the new foundation will allow the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS) to continue developing and maintaining its delivery to local people, including a comprehensive schools' programme, outreach work in deprived areas and social inclusion projects with young people not in education, employment or training.

- **Giving children greater access to Norfolk's museums** - at our final Cabinet meeting, we announced an exciting new partnership with the Children's University that will give far greater access to our museums for all our children. Children who join the Children's University – for example, via schools, or our libraries or the Museums Service, will in future, also get free access to our museums.

Looking ahead

Perhaps the principal challenge for this suite of highly valued services is how best to protect and develop them for the future in the face of diminishing council resources and rising demand in other frontline services. The watchwords this past year have been enhanced leadership, innovation in thinking, excellence in delivery, better marketing and service transformation. In the coming years, those elements will be more important than ever.



Healthy, safe and resilient communities

Most, if not all, our services have a part to play in helping build and sustain healthy, safe and resilient communities. Of particular note this year is the fact that we have assumed responsibility for public health. So we have a new statutory role, the Director of Public Health and new statutory responsibilities, which, among other things, include the responsibility to identify and help reduce health inequalities, promote good health, protect people's health, commission some important health services and provide expert information and advice to CCGs and others.

Seized with energy and commitment, this new service and these responsibilities give us an enormous opportunity to use public health's skills, knowledge and expertise across all our services to make a real difference to the health and well being of Norfolk people generally. Even more importantly, it equips us better to work in communities and with others to bring up the health of those whose health prospects and life chances are so much worse than others.

The integration has gone well and we have put a lot of effort and energy into welcoming and supporting our new colleagues from the NHS to feel at home here and to connect well with our other services.

We have also played a strong role in the Health and Wellbeing Partnership devoting energy and effort and resources to help it become as strong and effective as possible and built on good relationships.

Key highlights include

- **15 healthy towns** – Norfolk now has 15 designated 'Healthy Towns' – selected for particular action because they have been identified as having the greatest health needs of all Norfolk towns. To support them, our Public Health team works in partnership with others to support community based approaches that inspire and support them to take local action that will help improve the health and wellbeing of their residents.
- **Leading the way on building dementia friendly communities and helping reshape dementia services.** Our Public Health team has worked hard with other colleagues and partners to look across all dementia services to identify where the gaps are and how things could be improved. Their work will show us how many people have dementia now, how many will have it in the future, how the health and social services are responding to the need, and what needs to change to improve services for people with dementia and their carers. Our health and social care planners will use their findings to shape future services. In addition, Public Health's Healthy Communities team is working in and with communities and other NCC services, to provide and promote a wide variety of dementia friendly information sessions and activities.
- **Norfolk Trails** – we have continued to promote the health benefits of our Norfolk Trails assets work which was given a big boost this year when our Chairman, Hilary Cox, decided to highlight the trails and their health benefits herself, by using them to walk from King's Lynn all the way to Great Yarmouth.
- **A strong and effective response to the coastal flooding emergency** - whenever an emergency strikes, our authority has a very important role to play – a statutory one – in helping to manage it. When the winter floods struck, county council services right across the board worked tirelessly and effectively to help manage their impact, support the affected communities and individuals during and after the event and keep people well informed. Our authority was publicly praised for the work it did, in particular our Fire and Rescue Service and our communications activities, directly, and in support of other agencies.

- **A new Fire Risk Plan** – following public consultation, we have refreshed the Fire Risk Plan for 2014-17 which includes provision for a new fire station in south Lynn.
- **A positive peer review of the Fire and Rescue Service** – we sought a peer review of the service because our administration welcomes challenge and has been keen to see our services learn from others where we can. The review team's findings of our service were very positive.

Looking ahead

We need to identify, and use fully, the opportunities that our new Public Health service offers to improve and protect Norfolk people's health. This means making sure its reach is fully integrated into the council's work and not seen or felt to be somehow 'separate'. In particular, through leadership and championing of the public health agenda, and using our expert support, we can help Norfolk make progress on the three improvement areas set out in the health and wellbeing strategy (dementia, obesity and the social and emotional development of children under five years old).

It is vital that the council helps raise the profile and understanding of disadvantage and its impacts of Norfolk people which are severe. The health inequalities agenda is a very challenging one that the council cannot duck and must help meet.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

We have an effective and highly regarded service. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is the second most cost-effective service in England, when measured by cost per head of population, and the seventh largest service, when measured by the number of fire stations, in England. The service provides much more to our communities than just the core operational duties of firefighting and dealing with road collisions.

Across the country and more locally, there have been well-publicised discussions about the joining-up of services being the future model for sustainable delivery. This is not just for fire and rescue services but for all blue light services generally. Looking ahead, we will want and need to consider what our aspirations are, or otherwise, in this arena. Effectively, this comes down to two choices– should the council continue to be the Fire Authority and in doing so explore more widely ways in which the current service can contribute further to the delivery of other NCC operations, or should it merge with others to create a new, standalone, combined fire authority?







Environment and Transport Services

We continue to work hard, often in partnership with others, to care for and enhance access to Norfolk's beautiful countryside, as well as looking after 6000 miles of the county's roads.

Key highlights include

- We have re-procured our highways services and saved up to £4.4m a year in a deal with Lafarge Tarmac which could save taxpayers more than £50m over 12 years. The quality of repairs should improve by the use of more durable road surfacing – good news for everyone who uses our roads.
- Our new 'holdall' cards, allowing commuters to snap up bus tickets at the lowest possible price is proving popular with residents, with more than 2000 passes already issued.
- Norfolk's newest trail – the Wensum Way – has opened, a 12 mile 'missing link' which creates a new 96 mile walking challenge, bringing new customers for the businesses lying along the route.
- Faced with an increase in the number of motorcyclists killed or seriously injured in accidents, we are working with emergency services to encourage riders to train to stay safe on Norfolk's roads

Looking ahead

The council has plans to expand smart ticketing and develop multi-operator ticketing across Norfolk but there are real opportunities to expand its use with other public services such as libraries, school meals and public health applications.





Norfolk County Council's Budget



Efficient council operations

It is not possible in a summary report to feedback on all the activities of the past year that have helped make the council a more efficient organisation, with a much more strategic approach to managing public finances.

Key highlights include:

- **Strong budget management** - we started this year with a Budget dependent on our services delivering the £30m plus savings that had been factored in for 2013/14 and the need to plan for another £189 funding shortfall for 2014-17. As this year's outturn shows, efficient operations and close scrutiny of budgets, means we did deliver the 2013/14 savings and in fact, delivered a small underspend.
- **The 2014/15 Budget** - we produced a workable and sustainable budget for the coming year despite many obstacles and secured council support for it, with the addition of some small but important amendments. This included finding £19m to help meet the risk of having to terminate the Willows contract, necessary because the previous administration had not previously set aside any specific fund to manage any risk arising from the contract it had signed.
- **Consulting and listening** - we set the budget after consulting widely, not just on options for setting the current year's budget, but those that would help us close the gap for the next two years. Before we developed the options, we engaged a number of other agencies and organisations to help us shape our priorities. Over 4,407 individuals or organisations responded to the budget consultation, another 1,900 signed petitions and we engaged directly with some 1,200 people through consultation meetings and events.
- **Clear strategic financial direction – clearer reporting and monitoring** – we have put in place stronger reporting and monitoring arrangements and for the first time agreed that, in future, the council will have a three –year rolling budget. Given the dire future funding prospects and the size of the gaps ahead, the challenge to all of us is to save as much as possible through service transformation, closer integration and more sharing of services with others, more efficient and innovative delivery and generating more income where we can.
- **We have agreed the new committee system of governance** that will move the council forward so it becomes a more open, transparent and accountable organisation. Making the new system work well is down to all of us. Our hope and expectation is that it will, providing all councillors of whatever political persuasion embrace the change constructively and with good intent.
- **Ensuring capacity, stability and direction** - faced with vacancies at chief officer level and keen to drive up performance, we acted swiftly to secure the services of well qualified and highly professional interims who have all helped move their services, and the council forward, bringing in fresh challenge and other ways of doing things. Throughout the entire year, we have been helped enormously by the skills, professionalism and dedication of our Acting Managing Director, Anne Gibson, who has helped provide stability and leadership for our staff, while ensuring progress on the areas important to all of us
- **Digital Norfolk Ambition** - we have signed a groundbreaking partnership for ICT that will give us the technology to transform our business so we can work more flexibly, integrate with our partners, and make access to our services easier. ICT infrastructure in Norfolk County Council has suffered hugely over the years through underinvestment and not being recognised as the foundation block for better and more efficient working it really is. Thankfully, through DNA, we have now secured the provision of reliable and secure ICT and up-to-date information we can use to improve what we do.

- **A new concordat with Suffolk County Council** – we have signed a public agreement to join up and share services and resources where it is in the proven interests of our residents to do so. Among other things this year, we have agreed a joint consultant in public health post to cover the Yarmouth and Waveney area, and have moved further to integrate health and social care services for adults in those areas. We now share a senior property and asset post and have reached agreement in principle to integrate our customer access services within two years.
- **Good customer service** - we have maintained high standards of care and efficiency through our customer service channels which this year have remained at the top of their local government benchmarking club and retained the Cabinet Excellence Standard for Customer Service as delivered through our service centre.





Looking ahead

The financial prospects for the coming three to five years are grim and need managing carefully if we are to protect as much as possible the public services people value and need. The Office of Budget Responsibility is reporting a need to deliver further year on year savings of 5% for each of the years 2016- 2018, the first two years of the next Parliament.

The council will face further challenges, for example, from government policy changes, including the need to manage any policy consequences arising from the General Election in 2015, rising demand and changing expectations, some of which are highlighted in more detail in other parts of this report. Dealing with them will test Members and staff alike.

The council's No Overall Control status will continue to need us all to demonstrate good will, constructive dialogue and working arrangements and a willingness to engage with each other in the interests of Norfolk people and the efficient running of our organisation.

In August, our new Managing Director, Dr Wendy Thomson, will take up her new role and look to us for support and clear leadership to help the council achieve its objectives. I am confident she will be warmly welcomed and receive the support she needs, so she can put her extensive skills and experience to good use on the council's behalf.

This year has shown that much can be achieved against what can, at times, feel like rather overwhelming odds, and we are confident the council now has in place all the elements necessary to face the future with confidence in its ability to manage its business well.



Photo by Pete Le May

Norse

Norse continues to go from strength in the toughest of times, bringing stability for thousands of staff up and down the country and major benefits to Norfolk residents.

Key highlights include:

- **Apprenticeships** - in partnership with the County Council, Norse has recruited more than 100 apprentices, working in all areas of its business, from management trainees to vehicle fitters.
- **School meal prices frozen** for the third year running. Thousands of Norfolk children are being provided with a hot and healthy meal at a reasonable price every day.
- **Increased profits** - profits are up and we have formed a new relationship with the group. We have signed a new 10 year contract to treat 'dry' recyclable waste and Norse has established a new company to manage a range of waste-related activities which will see a £4m investment by Norse into waste transfer stations to accommodate Norfolk's future needs.
- **National recognition for high quality work.** This year saw the opening of the new Sam Wanamaker Playhouse at the Globe Theatre in London, Based on drawings of a Jacobean theatre auditorium by a protégé of Inigo Jones, it completes the Globe's founder, Sam Wanamaker's, vision for the site which was for a pair of theatres - one outdoor, the other indoor - to represent the varied theatrical landscape of late Elizabethan and Jacobean London.

The Theatre Trust appointed NPS Practice Principal, Jon Greenfield, as its reconstruction architect for this prestigious national project.

Looking ahead

Norse has responded to the challenges in the public sector by reducing margins, restructuring teams and finding smarter and more efficient ways of working. The Group remains confident of finding further opportunities for growth, bringing huge benefits to Norfolk's economy.

NorseCare will open a new specialist dementia home in Gorleston in June and is working to create a similar facility in Bowthorpe.



In conclusion

This is only a summary report of what has been a very challenging but rewarding and effective year for our administration.

No administration has had to face the sheer volume and complexity of problems we had to tackle and I feel we have handled them deftly and openly.

Over the past year, that very openness has been welcomed and embraced constructively by some more than others. The fact is that it is much easier to shoot down new proposals or ideas from the sidelines, than to engage constructively with others to work things through. The new, more transparent and more inclusive system of government now coming into being puts decision making into the hands of all 84 of us, so to that extent, the sidelines are removed and it is now down to all of us to make things work

However, throughout the past year, the alliance has held firm, weathering successfully difficult matters that would have tested any administration – however large its majority or however long its duration. It has done so through mutual give and take and a healthy respect for the valuable contribution others had to make.

This leadership and cohesion has enabled Norfolk County Council, not just to maintain its momentum, but to set a new and more open and accountable course and move the council forward in the key areas where it needed to step up its performance for the people we serve.

No decision of Cabinet would have happened without the work of a superb set of senior officers to implement them. The Council has a loyal, enthusiastic and skilled workforce and their cooperation and willingness to help has made our tasks easier than they would otherwise have been.



George Nobbs

Leader Norfolk County Council
May 2014



