

Annual Report 2012/13

Small Government Big Society





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Published separately:

Appendix 1 - Annual Action Plan 2012/13 delivery reports

Appendix 2 - Performance indicator results for 2012/13

Appendix 3 – Workforce profile statistics 2012/13

Introduction

This Annual Report illustrates the progress that North Norfolk District Council has made in the last year. This report primarily presents the progress in delivering our 'Corporate Plan for 2012-2015: small government, big society', including the first Annual Action Plan for 2012/13 designed to achieve the goals in the Corporate Plan, but it also sets out other important activities, achievements and issues the Council has tackled in the past year.

Despite the impact of the slowdown in the economy and the challenges being set for the Council by central government we have met or exceeded the majority of our goals for the year 2012/13 and there have been significant achievements. This is illustrated in the pages that follow and the appendices one and two that show in detail our performance against the Annual Action Plan and our targets. Our highlights include:

- Consulted on a proposed Local Development Order at Egmere (to support wind energy schemes off the north Norfolk coast)
- Supported businesses to retain jobs and helped people into work
- Launched Enterprise North Norfolk (to support new business start-ups)
- Supported the North Norfolk Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG)
- Granted planning permission for 536 homes. Of these 134 were affordable homes
- Offered support to owners wishing to rent their property (providing more choice of property to people seeking a home)
- Obtained funding for the £8million Cromer Coast Protection capital scheme (starting this autumn)
- Received Gold Awards in the Loo of the Year Awards (for Happisburgh and Sheringham East Prom)
- Achieved four awards from twelve categories at the 2013 East Anglia Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Building Excellence awards
- Achieved a Green Flag for Holt Country Park for the eighth year in succession and for the first time achieved a Green Flag for Sadler's Wood, North Walsham
- Awarded the 5-star award for the overall cleanliness of the district (Clean Britain awards)
- Obtained funding for and promoted the very successful 'Big Switch and Save' (enabling 2,796 households to reduce their energy bills, the largest number in the county)
- Operated the Big Society Fund for a full year, during which time 47 projects were awarded funding amounting to a total of £397,537 (encouraging and supporting local community-based projects)



Cllr Tom FitzPatrick
Leader of the Council



Sheila Oxtoby
Chief Executive

The Council has a statutory obligation to monitor, and make available to the public, certain information regarding the make-up of the workforce and to analyse any potential impact of employment policies and practices on employees. This information is contained in this report as appendix three alongside some other general workforce profile information.

Looking ahead, our second Annual Action Plan for 2013/14 sets out the Council's priorities for the next year. In addition, a business plan is being developed to allow the Council to meet the challenges set out in our Corporate Plan.

Handwritten signatures of Cllr Tom FitzPatrick and Sheila Oxtoby. The signature of Cllr Tom FitzPatrick is a cursive script, and the signature of Sheila Oxtoby is a stylized, bold cursive.

Our vision and values

North Norfolk is a unique and beautiful place. It is somewhere we cherish and we are proud to be entrusted with the role of leading our district and contributing to the future wellbeing and prosperity of the many communities we represent.

Our vision

Our priorities for North Norfolk are:

- ▶ To boost employment and create more jobs
- ▶ To enable the provision of new homes and the infrastructure that goes with them
- ▶ To protect our coastline and the character of our countryside and built heritage
- ▶ To empower individuals and local communities to have a greater say in their own futures
- ▶ To reform the organisation to deliver high quality services that achieve our priorities in an efficient manner that represents good value for local taxpayers

Our values

We will:

- ▶ Empower people and communities to make their own decisions
- ▶ Support people in taking control of their own lives
- ▶ Be innovative and flexible in the delivery of our services
- ▶ Be open and transparent in our decision-making
- ▶ Work with partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors where appropriate for the benefit of the District
- ▶ Value and respect the roles of councillors and staff and act with integrity at all times

Our priorities

Jobs and the local economy

What we want to achieve:

A district with a thriving economy offering better jobs and prospects for local people.

What we have done in 2012/13 towards meeting the priority:

- Established better dialogue with the operators of the gas terminal at Bacton. Over one third of the entire UK gas supply is piped through the terminal. The companies based there employ a large number of locally-based people and contribute greatly to the economy of north Norfolk.
- Founded, with partners, the North Norfolk Renewables consortium to take advantage of opportunities for inward investment, employment and local contracts associated with the development of major offshore wind energy proposals off the north Norfolk coast. Launched the North Norfolk Renewables website promoting the offshore energy sector at the East of England Energy Group (EETEGR) Southern North Sea Conference and Exhibition event
- Joined the Norfolk and Suffolk Energy Alliance to ensure the energy sector in north Norfolk can join with partners to meet new challenges and position itself to seize fresh opportunities to capitalise on a sustainable, prosperous future based on secure and less carbon intense energy supplies
- Consulted upon a proposed Local Development Order at Egmere to provide a centre for survey, project development and maintenance activities in support of future wind energy schemes off the north Norfolk coast
- Assisted 45 businesses to retain jobs and/or increase employment and assisted 67 economically active people into work
- Provided vocational training to 299 people to increase their employability and confidence
- Launched Enterprise North Norfolk, a programme to support new business start-ups through training and mentoring of new entrepreneurs
- Held a summit promoting apprenticeships in rural areas and developed proposals to raise awareness of the County Council's Apprenticeship Norfolk programme. During 2012/13, 407 people started apprenticeships and 180 people completed apprenticeships



Support of wind energy schemes off the North Norfolk coast is a burgeoning industry for the district.

Photo: StudioCanal



Above: North Norfolk's unique qualities as a tourist destination are promoted by partners including the newly established Destination Management Organisation.

Left: with Enterprise North Norfolk, NNDC is encouraging business start-ups.

Top left: Steve Coogan filming Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa, one of many film and television projects in the District to have received active support from NNDC.

- Started a programme of 'Introduction to Self-Employment' seminars to assist job seekers to consider setting up their own business, the first being delivered in February 2013 in North Walsham
- Supported the North Norfolk Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG), which has developed £2.4million worth of projects that have been submitted to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for approval
- Provided the initial package of funding and took the lead to establish the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) as a private-public sector partnership to promote north Norfolk for tourism
- Continued to support Norfolk County Council's Broadband Programme to update broadband speeds in the district and included the installation of fibre optic broadband in Sheringham
- Supported film, television and photographic projects in the district, including the filming of *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*, by preparing locations for filming, setting up trade waste collections, supporting location management, co-ordination and liaison of supporting services to help promote the district as a place to visit and a place that is open for business
- Implemented the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FTRS) that helps consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving information about the hygiene standards in food outlets
- Supported local businesses to achieve high standards of food hygiene by providing advice, support and training. 95% of businesses in the FTRS scheme in the district have a rating of three or higher (the highest rating is five and the lowest zero)

CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

- Identified the need for support for micro, small and medium sized businesses in the rural area so that they can provide apprenticeships and applied for funding from the Coastal Communities Fund to fund action to overcome the barriers facing small businesses in engaging apprentices and help young people on the pathway to work experience opportunities

Housing and infrastructure

What we want to achieve:

Everyone in North Norfolk should have the opportunity to buy or rent a decent home at a price they can afford, in a community where they want to live and work.

What we have done in 2012/13 towards meeting the priority:

- Secured Government funding for Holt Town Council's neighbourhood planning project through the pilot scheme. Holt Town Council is considering formal submission of the plan
- Encouraged Neighbourhood Plans where communities wish to take these forward to deliver additional housing by holding a seminar for parish and town councils
- Carried out stakeholder consultation and gathered evidence to assess the viability of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy on development viability and infrastructure requirements
- Adopted a development brief for a site in Stalham and undertook consultation on the development brief for a site in Fakenham. A draft brief has been submitted for Holt and this was published for public consultation in April/May 2013. The remaining development brief for a site in North Walsham will be developed in 2013/14
- Granted planning permission for 536 homes including major residential development at: Stalham Road, Hoveton; Langham Road, Blakeney and land off Yarmouth Road, Stalham. This is a significant rise compared to the previous three years. A number of other pending proposals are expected to progress to permissions during 2013. Of the total of 536 homes 134 were for affordable homes
- Improved the time to reach planning decisions for major applications. The percentage of applications determined within the time limit improved from 32% to 58%
- Adopted a three-part Housing Strategy; 'Housing and infrastructure' identifies what actions the Council will take to provide more housing in north Norfolk to meet peoples different needs and ensure the required infrastructure is delivered alongside new homes, 'Making the best use of the existing housing stock' seeks to reduce the number of empty homes, review how affordable housing is allocated and ensure homes in North Norfolk are in good condition, 'Supporting vulnerable people to live independently within the community' – ensuring households can access support to enable them to live independently that there are opportunities to ensure households have support to access learning and employment opportunities and that a range of specialist housing is provided as required
- Developed the Empty Property Matching Service to introduce people wishing to buy an empty residential property in north Norfolk with those who have an empty property that they want to sell. This service offers an extra option, as well as estate agents, property websites and auctions, to owners of empty properties and prospective buyers
- Offered support to owners wishing to rent their property and provide a service to support new landlords and will also advertise, for a small fee, the property on the *Your Choice Your Home* which provides access to over 4,900 home seekers and more choice of property to people seeking a home
- Set up the first Integrated Housing Adaptation Team (IHAT) in the county by working in partnership with Norfolk County Council. Based at district councils the IHATs include assessment staff from Norfolk County Council and technical staff from North Norfolk District Council involved in delivering adaptations for disabled people through Disabled Facilities Grant. The teams have been set up to improve customer service and enable more people to remain in their own home

CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

- The speed of development has been slow due to the wider economic picture. Recognising this, policy changes will be brought forward in 2013/14 to encourage the building of more homes
- The number of empty homes brought back into use has not been as high as planned. However, a great deal is now being done to improve this situation. We have:
 - ▶ Completed the empty homes pilot, which involved three properties, one of which has been brought back into use
 - ▶ Established an Enforcement Board to provide an interdepartmental approach to complex empty homes cases which during the period December 2012 to May 2013 considered 47 long term empty properties and five have so far been brought back into use
- An external, independent team has undertaken a peer review across the Planning Service to deliver an improvement action plan. We will:
 - ▶ continue to improve the time taken to process planning applications
 - ▶ make more information about planning decisions available to the public
 - ▶ improve the way information about decisions is communicated



Photo: Broadland Housing Association



Above: these four Passivhaus affordable homes were jointly funded by NNDC and Broadland Housing Association.

Left: 24 affordable dwellings jointly funded by NNDC and Victory Housing Trust.

Coast, countryside and built heritage

What we want to achieve:

A district where the beautiful natural environment and built heritage is valued and protected for future generations and where the coastline is defended against erosion wherever practicable.

What we have done in 2012/13 towards meeting the priority:

- Completed a programme of maintenance works to deliver the objective of defending coastal settlements against erosion wherever practicable
- Obtained Government funding and commissioned design works for the £10million Cromer Coast Protection Scheme, to enable the management of the coast defences in Cromer. The local community is being consulted about the works during the summer of 2013, they are due to start in late 2013 and are planned to be completed in 2016
- Adopted the Kelling to Lowestoft Ness Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) as has the Environment Agency. The plan provides a large-scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal erosion and flooding for this part of the coast. Started a Cromer to Winterton study to improve our understanding of coastal processes, inform future funding bids in line with the SMP and ensure efforts are directed at the areas of greatest need
- Began the remedial and repair works to Cromer Pier structure and successful completion of the works is anticipated in summer 2013. The project is anticipated to cost £1.35million
- Achieved four awards from twelve categories at the 2013 East Anglia Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Building Excellence awards
- Achieved a Green Flag for Holt Country Park for the eighth year in succession and for the first time achieved a Green Flag for Sadler's Wood, North Walsham
- Achieved Blue Flag accreditation for all four main resort beaches at Sheringham, Cromer, Mundesley and Sea Palling for the 2012/13 season. East Runton has also been awarded the Quality Coast Award
- Won gold awards for the innovative new toilet blocks at Happisburgh and Sheringham East Promenade in the National Loo of the Year Awards held in December 2012. The Happisburgh block was also a double national category award winner
- Started and ran a campaign which has reduced dog fouling in identified hotspots across the district. This has proved so successful the approach will continue during 2013
- Received a 5-star award for the cleanliness of the district at the Clean Britain Awards in September 2012
- Organised and promoted the Greenbuild event, which is the region's biggest 'green lifestyles' event that has now been running for ten years. The event in 2012 attracted around 6,000 visitors, with 95 businesses exhibiting
- Negotiated an improved siting of a large solar field at Egmore so there is less visual impact – responding to community concerns and protecting our environment while still meeting our obligation to provide alternative energy sources

CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

- The target of producing four conservation area plans by March 2013 was not achieved. However, the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Cromer has been adopted. The plan for Walsingham will go to public consultation in May 2013
- The waste and cleansing contract is a closely managed contract. When a problem arises the Council issues a default notice. The number of shortcomings and therefore the number of default notices issued has diminished as the year has progressed. However, there have been 39 defaults in the contract. The contractor, Kier, has strengthened the local management team and improvements from this change are evident across the contract. Close monitoring of the contract will continue



Top: £1.35million remedial works on Cromer Pier were completed in the summer.

NNDC's annual Greenbuild (left and above) is the largest 'green lifestyle' event in the region.

Localism

What we want to achieve:

To embrace the Government's localism agenda to empower individuals and communities to take more responsibility for their own futures and to build a stronger civil society.

What we have done in 2012/13 towards meeting the priority:

- Operated the Big Society Fund for a full year, during which time 47 projects were awarded funding amounting to a total of £397,537 to support projects to help build strong communities in the district. It aims to help communities to develop new and innovative projects which will improve their social and economic wellbeing
- Delivered energy efficiency advice to households with the objective of alleviating fuel poverty through the 'Stay Warm and Cosy' initiative across the district
- Carried out regular meetings with town and parish councils to improve communications, explore the possibilities for town and parish councils to run services, widen community participation in the democratic process, improve health and wellbeing and encourage neighbourhood planning
- Established procedures to support the Community Right to Bid and Right to Challenge, which enable communities to deliver services in their area and take control of assets for the benefit of the community, and signposted these on the Council's website
- Successfully transferred the Wells Tourist Information Centre service to the Wells Maltings Trust putting a local service under the control of the local community while saving £100,000 over the next five years
- Established a new 'enabling' fund to support community initiatives across the district in the next year. This fund is for organisations which have project ideas that fall outside the provisions of the Big Society Fund Grant Scheme, perhaps because they are larger or more complex projects
- Supported the Leadership of Place Project in North Walsham that has undertaken property appraisals and considered options for town centre development and improvement linked to major retail planning applications in the town
- Successfully obtained funding of £18,500 from the Department of Energy and Climate Change for two projects aimed at reducing resident's energy costs – a 'Collective Energy Switching' scheme and a pilot scheme known as the 'Energy Box'
- The Collective Energy Switching scheme, branded as the 'Norfolk Big Switch and Save', was joined by 2,796 households in North Norfolk. This was the largest number in the county, enabling those households to save money on their energy bills
- Produced and distributed 122 'Energy Boxes' to a contact within each town or parish in the district. Each Energy Box includes information for local residents on a wide range of energy issues, mostly targeted at reducing their energy costs, as well as finding out about support and advice which is available to them
- Launched a community resilience campaign across north Norfolk with ten communities to build expertise in responding to emergencies and major incidents and support them to produce local resilience plans and form local emergency teams
- Played the major role with multi-agency partners to co-ordinate and manage the successful delivery of the Olympic Torch Relay through three north Norfolk towns (Fakenham, Holt and Cromer) with over 30,000 spectators enjoying this prestigious event

- Worked with communities to establish six community gyms, including two for neighbouring councils, benefitting residents who would not normally have access to health and leisure facilities
- Supported the arts to produce 1,111 event/exhibition days; attracting 61,748 attendances. 1,527 artists and performers were involved in delivering these activities; supported by 2,753 volunteers. Further events were promoted through the Arts website, e-newsletters and officers provided support to artists, arts agencies and voluntary organisations which, in turn, enabled further work to be delivered to local communities
- Completed the exterior refurbishment of the Sheringham Little Theatre. The Council spend on this project was £48,091. This has since been followed by a grant from the Norfolk County Construction Fund which has allocated £66,000 to the refurbishment of the interior of the coffee bar and front of house facilities
- Managed the annual canvass and monthly changes to ensure the register of electors is accurate and complete, ensuring the local community is able to participate in the democratic process

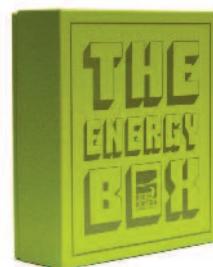
CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

- We will build on the work started this year to improve our engagement with Town and Parish councils and community and voluntary organisations across the district.



Above: the hugely successful Olympic Torch Relay saw NNDC working with multi-partner agencies.

Right: 'The Energy Box' and 'Big Switch and Save' are two on-going projects aimed at reducing our residents energy costs.



Delivering the vision

What we want to achieve:

We will make the Council more efficient so that we can deliver our priorities and offer value for money for local taxpayers.

What we have done in 2012/13 towards meeting the priority:

- Reviewed and implemented a new management structure improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council and making a saving of £231,000 each year
- Reviewed and updated the Council's Constitution to ensure continued sound governance of the Council
- Developed an external trading arm (eastlaw) that has reduced the net cost of the Legal Service by £85,700 (21.09%)
- Improved the Council's website, which has been ranked through Sitemorse as the highest ranking government website in the county according to function, accessibility and performance
- Established a Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Working Party to review the service and identify potential savings
- Continued to review and monitor sickness absence in line with the Council's policy to ensure that staff are able to return to work effectively and ensure sickness levels remain low, at 6.80 days per full time equivalent (FTE) employee
- Took a lead role in a county-wide project to procure a new Material Recycling Facility with a view to awarding the contract in May 2013. The new arrangements will allow a wider range of materials to be collected from doorstep and recycled at lower cost
- Set up the Customer Service Improvement (CSI) Board to oversee all customer service improvements including web development to maximise efficiency and savings while delivering the best possible level of service to our customers
- Delivered excellent face-to-face customer service with over 90% customer satisfaction levels for most services
- Implemented a new system for managing the Revenues and Benefits Service
- Continued tight financial control, achieving a surplus of £185,000 at the year end

CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

- There were some problems with system stability after implementation of the Revenues and Benefits shared services project with Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council. These were addressed in a number of ways and since this time North Norfolk District Council staff have enjoyed increased functionality and reliability of the system, allowing a significant improvement in performance and the issuing of Council Tax and Business Rate bills is considered to have gone well
- Not all Internal Audit recommendations rated as Medium and High were implemented on time. Some delays in implementing recommendations were as a result of reprioritising service. Performance in this area is being addressed
- A Business Transformation Programme is being developed to direct the Council's IT investment and make improvements in the ways we deliver our services to our customers. This will address any performance issues including those regarding our services provided over the telephone



eastlaw
efficiency, economy, expertise

By operating as an external trading arm, Eastlaw (above) has reduced the net cost of the legal service by more than £85,000.

Left: northnorfolk.org is the highest ranked government website in Norfolk.

Financial summary

Despite continued economic uncertainty and funding reductions the Council has achieved a surplus for the year of just over £185,000, mainly due to additional income being received for a number of services. The surplus has been achieved despite the return on investments being lower than planned and a small reduction in Council Tax and Business Rates collection (largely due to the conversion to a new revenues and benefits system).

The overall position continues to demonstrate sound financial management of the Council's budget and is a good position for North Norfolk District Council to be in when taking into account the funding cuts we continue to experience. Prudent financial planning and management remain key.

The surplus for the year of £185,000 has been transferred to the restructuring and 'invest to save' earmarked reserve to fund one-off costs that will deliver future efficiency savings. During 2012/13 investment income totalled £206,481, from an average balance invested of £25.1million, earning an average rate of 0.82%. The three main treasury management principles of liquidity, yield and security continue to apply as we continue to regularly review our new and current investments.

Given the current economic environment the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates has been challenging, the Council Tax collected for the year was slightly below target (at 97.9% compared to the target of 98.3%), and for Business Rates again slightly below target (98.4% compared to the target of 98.9%).

The under collection was primarily due to the system conversion and the temporary performance issues of the system in the following months, which have now been rectified.

Capital

Capital expenditure is incurred on items that have a useful life beyond one year, for example upgrading and improving assets such as equipment and buildings. Such expenditure is financed from grants, capital receipts, reserves and revenue contributions. Capital expenditure totalled some £4.5million in the year, involving a range of projects including coast protection, housing and infrastructure and asset related projects.

There has been some slippage of capital budgets between financial years where schemes were not able to commence or be completed within the planned timeframes. Housing capital schemes amounted to £2.1million of the total capital spend; this included private sector renewal grants and disabled facility grants, along with support to Housing Associations for affordable housing projects. Other capital spend in the year included capital grants awarded under the Big Society Scheme of £282,000, structural works on Cromer Pier of £610,581, various coastal protection works of £188,319, improvements to Sheringham Promenade lighting totalling £56,889, and expenditure on various computer systems and hardware of £151,524.

Reserves and balances

The Council currently has a policy of maintaining the general fund balance at a minimum of £1.6 million; at the end of 2012/13 this figure was at just over £1.7million, although the future finance forecast does assume that £600,000 of this will be used over the next three financial years to cushion the impact of grant reductions so the policy will need to be reviewed. In addition, the Council has a number of earmarked reserves held to fund future one-off projects or where there is a need to hold a contingency to meet future liabilities. The total of all earmarked reserves held at 31 March 2013 was £6.4million, of which there is planned usage over the coming year of just under £673,000. All reserves and balances along with current commitments are reviewed annually.

In addition to these reserves there is a further balance of capital receipts of approximately £7million at the year end. Capital receipts are generated from asset sales and must be used to finance capital expenditure. While the capital receipts are available to finance future capital expenditure, the balance along with all other reserves earns investment income which supports the revenue account. The balance on the Council's general reserve currently remains above the recommended balance. Over the autumn as part of the annual financial planning and budget setting process all reserves and the current recommended balance will be reviewed in light of the continued financial challenges facing local authorities.



Annual Report

2012/13

Small Government Big Society

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