



Annual Report 2013/14

Small Government Big Society





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Contents

Introduction	3
Content	
Our vision and values	7
Our priorities	8
Jobs and the local economy	8
Housing and infrastructure	10
Coast, countryside and built heritage	12
Localism	14
Delivering the vision	16
Financial summary	18

Published separately:

- Appendix 1 - Annual Action Plan Delivery Reports
- Appendix 2 - Performance Indicator Results
- Appendix 3 - Responding to the Tidal Surge
- Appendix 4 – Workforce profile statistics

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 second Annual Action Plan for 2013/14 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.

We have met or exceeded the majority of our goals for the year 2013/14 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:

- Progressed the proposed Local Development Order at Egmere (to support wind energy schemes off the north Norfolk coast)
- Encouraged 45 new businesses through the Enterprise North Norfolk programme
- Granted planning permission for 582 homes. Of these, 113 were affordable homes
- Implemented the Housing Delivery Incentive Scheme which has been adopted on 30 sites which will provide a total of 494 dwellings
- Seen continued signs of improved conditions and delivery rates of new homes during 2013/14 with the delivery of 383 dwellings of which, 153 (38%) were affordable dwellings.
- Commenced the £8m Cromer Sea Defence Scheme
- Achieved a new Green Flag award for Pretty Corner Woods in Sheringham
- Received Gold Awards in the Loo of the Year Awards (for Happisburgh and Sheringham East Prom) for the second year in a row
- Improved significantly the performance of the Planning Service for determining planning applications during the second half of 2013/14
- Designated the Parishes of Corpusty and Saxthorpe and Holt as Neighbourhood Areas and work is progressing on the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.
- Successfully managed the Big Society Fund, delivering projects with some £225,000 being awarded for enabling projects and a further £219,000 for smaller community based projects
- Approved a £1.4m Business Transformation Programme including an IT Strategy and Customer Management Strategy
- Identified savings and additional income in 2014/15 of £581,000

The tidal surge in December 2013 has had a significant impact on North Norfolk, including the Council. There has been an enormous amount of work done by all the people, communities, businesses and public bodies working in partnership to recover from the damage caused and make the coastline “fit for business” for the 2014 season. It is testament to the strength of our local communities and the public bodies that support them that the immediate impact of the storm was reduced and so much of the recovery work has already been completed. For more detail please see appendix three.

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 four alongside some other general workforce profile information.

Looking ahead, our third Annual Action Plan for 2014/15 sets out the Council's priorities for the next year including the remaining works as a result of the tidal surge.



Cllr Tom FitzPatrick
Leader of the Council



Sheila Oxtoby
Chief Executive

Thomas FitzPatrick

S. Oxtoby

Content

The Annual Report shows progress against the Corporate Plan 2012-2015 themes, together with any other relevant performance achievements and issues.

The purpose of the report and the process for producing it is to highlight any performance issues to help the Council identify areas for discussion and take action to secure improvement in the future where it is needed.

Each theme has an assessment of progress achieved during the year in delivering the Annual Action Plan 2013/14 and achieving targets. It presents key achievements, issues and challenges faced during 2013/14.

The appendices contain the detailed evidence to support the overview and assessments. Appendix 1 gives progress reports for each activity in the 2013/14 action plan and Appendix 2 shows performance and further information against each performance indicator.



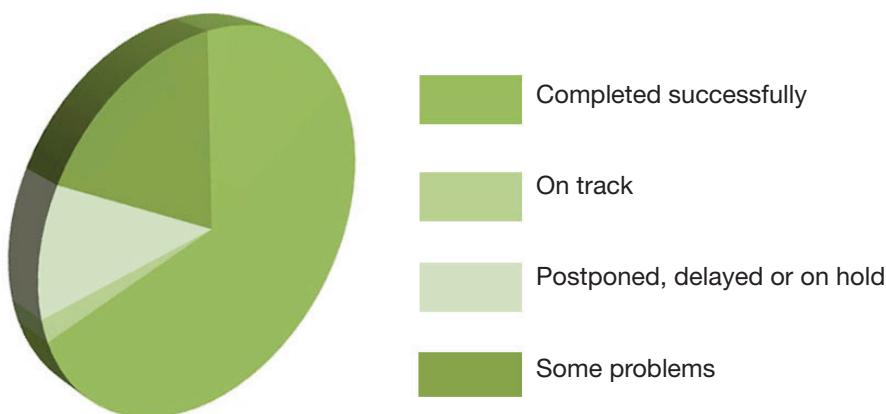
Signifies an action or target achieved that has an outcome that meets our equalities objectives.

Overview

1. The majority of the 49 activities in the Annual Action Plan 2013/14 are progressing to plan (35). Performance is being closely monitored, particularly for the small number of activities where issues or problems have been identified (five) or the activity is on hold (one). Some activities have already been completed successfully (eight). See Chart 1 below.
2. Of the 16 performance indicators where a target has been set eight are on or above target, one close to target and seven below target.
3. Where assessment of performance in 2013/14 is possible against performance in 2012/13 18 indicators have improved, four are unchanged and one is worse compared to last year. See Chart 2 below.
4. See Appendices 1 and 2 for data and progress reports for individual activities and performance indicators.

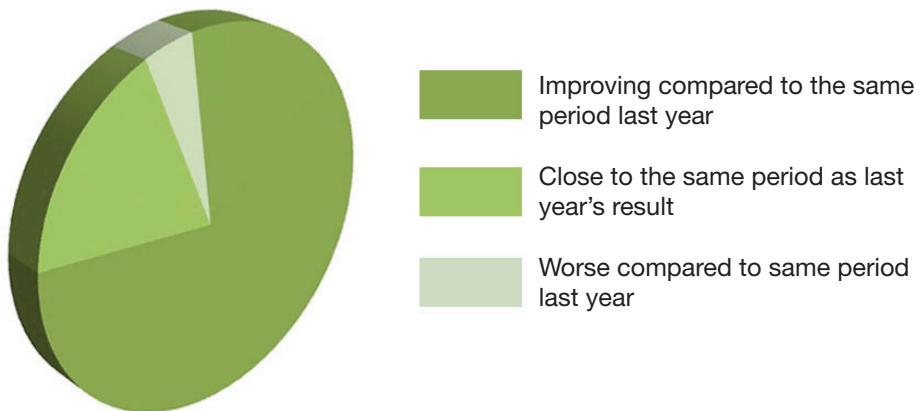
Activities

Chart 1 : Progress in delivering the activities in the Annual Action Plan 2013/14



Performance Indicators

Chart 2 : Performance indicators direction of travel in 2013/14



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 2013/14 towards meeting the priority:

1. Progressed the proposal to develop a Local Development Order for Egmere to accommodate investment by businesses associated with the development and operation of offshore wind schemes off the North Norfolk coast.
2. Received planning applications for the allocated development sites at North Walsham and Holt with a combined housing number of up to 391.
3. Advised Kinnerton Confectionery in the expansion of its factory in Fakenham by 2,710 sqm, safeguarding the jobs of 600+ employees and supporting a further 90 new jobs.
4. Seen an increase in the rateable value of business stock within North Norfolk of almost £1m.
5. Promoted business growth through a North Norfolk enterprise and start-up grant scheme.
6. Encouraged 45 new businesses through the Enterprise North Norfolk programme.
7. Engaged with over 60 local businesses at the March 2014 skills event, 'Business Magic'. Helped existing businesses resulting directly in 16 new apprenticeships being created. From August 2013 to January 2014 there were 350 new apprentices starting in North Norfolk, 260 under 25.
8. Supported Visit North Norfolk, Coast and Countryside, the newly established Destination Management Organisation in North Norfolk.
9. Actively supporting Norfolk County Council in the development of proposals for the re-use of the former RAF Coltishall site.
10. Employed directly three apprentices during 2013/14 who are undertaking qualifications at level 2 in business administration.
11. Supported the first longer distance triathlon to be hosted in North Norfolk and the Pedal Norfolk event hosted at Holkham. Both events are due to run again in 2014/15.
12. Reduced costs to market traders to try to ensure that North Norfolk's traditional markets continue to play an important part in the economies of market towns.
13. Offered half price beach huts in Spring and Autumn 2013.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The Council plans to:

Develop a Growth Plan and Business Engagement Strategy for the district which will set out where the Council can support and enable business growth and will provide a framework for economic development in the district and how we hope to better engage with businesses.



BUSINESS MAGIC

Businesses and education providers from across the district met to better understand how they can play a proactive role in the career development of young people.

Far right: Employees at the Kinnerton food processing plant in Fakenham

Right: Oyster Marine shipbuilding yard in Hoveton

Below: Crisp Maltings in Fakenham



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 2013/14 towards meeting the priority:

1. Implemented the Housing Delivery Incentive Scheme to encourage development in North Norfolk whilst ensuring that the quality of developments remain acceptable. This scheme has been adopted on 30 sites which will provide a total of 494 dwellings.
2. Continued to bring more empty homes back into use, particularly those that have been empty in some cases for decades, with direct intervention over 50 cases that have so far been dealt with having seen a positive outcome.
3. Maximised the New Homes Bonus awarded to the Council with an increase of £547,785 from 2013/14 to 2014/15.
4. Seen continued signs of improved conditions and delivery rates of new homes during 2013/14 with the delivery of 383 dwellings compared to that of last year (242) of which 153 (38%) were affordable dwellings.
5. Seen the highest number of affordable homes (153) completed in the district since the end of the council housing programme. This represents a significant increase in delivery both through 100% affordable housing schemes and as part of market developments.
6. **Working in partnership with Housing Associations, provided 112 new build one and two bedroom affordable properties to rent across the district. Four bungalows built to the full wheelchair standard were also provided of which one had three bedrooms and the remaining three had two bedrooms.**
7. Delivered its Housing Strategy approved in 2012 and is engaging with a number of parish councils to address local housing need.
8. Seen a continued improvement in the number of homes granted planning permission, increased from 536 in 2012/13 to 582 in 2013/14.
9. Made progress to bring forward the allocation in Fakenham (site F01) with agreement to bring forward the development brief for this major application within the first half of 2014, allowing for the submission of planning applications during 2014 with the aim of commencing on site during 2015.
10. Continued to deliver the car park improvement programme with surfacing improvements made to the car parks in Holt (Albert Street), Mundesley (Beach Rd) and Fakenham Connect.
11. Achieved Gold Awards for the public conveniences in both Happisburgh and Sheringham (East Promenade) for the second year in a row in the 2013 Loo of the Year Awards
12. **Completed 110 disabled facilities grants for adaptations so that people with disabilities can remain in their homes.**

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The Council plans to:

1. Implement the Local Investment Strategy: Loans to Registered Providers Scheme which is designed to ensure higher levels of housing delivery through the use of Council resources. This is an innovative and ambitious project, but is hoped to deliver much needed homes in our towns and villages.
2. Continue to ensure that the council's assets are fit for purpose. Where assets are not performing as they should improvements will need to be made or alternative uses sought.
3. Maximise new homes bonus through bringing empty properties back into use and maximising housing delivery.



Action on this long-term unsightly building is currently being undertaken by North Norfolk District Council

For further information telephone
01263 516207

www.northnorfolk.org  @NorthNorfolkDC

Left: Bringing empty homes back into use.

Below: Award winning affordable homes in Fulmodeston. Photo credit; Broadland Housing Association.



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 2013/14 towards meeting the priority:

1. Through the work of the Enforcement Board enabled long term empty properties to be tackled throughout the district.
2. Improved significantly the performance of the Planning Service for determining planning applications during the second half of 2013/14, resulting in improvements in performance across all three categories of planning application last year. The percentage of major applications determined within time has improved from 58% to 77%.
3. Entered into its first Planning Performance Agreement, for the cable work for the Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm, which will act as a pilot project to assess the benefit of introducing PPA's as an integral part of the service.
4. Completed the £1.2m Cromer Pier repair scheme.
5. Commenced the £8m Cromer Sea Defence scheme.
6. Successfully had most of the frontages open for business within two weeks of the storm surge on 5 December 2013 and most of the repair work is now either complete or nearing completion. The storm surge caused very significant levels of damage costing £3m along the coast which required rapid response in terms of immediate emergency repairs and arranging long term repair work. (See page 7 for further detail)
7. Delivered 67 countryside and beach events. Events were held at Holt Country Park, Bacton Woods, Sadler's Wood, Pretty Corner Woods and some beaches. Total participation at events was 5,800 in 2013/14 compared with 2,714 in 2012/13.
-  8. Achieved a new Green Flag award for Pretty Corner Woods in Sheringham while Blue Flags were retained at Sheringham, Cromer and Sea Palling. Quality Coast Awards were awarded at East Runton and Mundesley.
-  9. Improved the household waste recycling rate from 42.02% in 2012/13 to 43.47% in 2013/14.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The Council plans to:

1. Keep up the debate about the funding for coastal management, working with communities to seek locally acceptable solutions to the longer term issues. The impacts of the storm surge have been significant, not only in terms of the level of funding to address the repairs, but also in raising awareness of the continual challenge that coastal erosion places on our communities.
2. Continue to drive forward the required repairs to Council property still outstanding following the storm surge to ensure that income streams are protected along with the Council's reputation.
3. Improve planning performance further and continue to maintain pressure on property and land owners who hold empty property or properties falling into disrepair.



Top: Wells harbour

Centre: An information board about the Cromer Coast Protection Scheme

Bottom, left: The storm surge hits Cromer

Bottom, right: Civil Contingencies Manager Richard Cook meets David Cameron

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 2013/14 towards meeting the priority:

1. Established a Localism Board to provide a steer with respect to Localism initiatives and community projects, particularly in relation to expressions of interest for local public services (under the Community Right to Challenge) and nominations for assets of Community Value (under the Community Right to Bid)
2. Designated the Parishes of Corpusty and Saxthorpe and Holt as Neighbourhood Areas and work is progressing on the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.
-  3. Signed up to the 'Hate Free Norfolk' Pledge demonstrating commitment to treating all customers and staff fairly and with dignity and respect. Promoted North Norfolk as a safe place to live, visit and work where hate crime should not be tolerated.
-  4. Successfully managed the Big Society Fund, delivering projects with some £225,000 being awarded for enabling projects and a further £219,000 for smaller community based projects including multi-use games areas and skate parks across the district.
-  5. Joined the Your Voice membership scheme allowing everyone interested in sharing their views and experiences to help develop and improve a wide range of services.
-  6. Been successful in a £211,512 funding application to Sport England's 'Community Sports Activation Fund' to increase access to sport for women, girls and older people by setting up six community hubs in community settings and ten sports clubs based at high school sites across the district over the next three years.
-  7. Offered free 'rock school' workshops to 13 – 18 year olds in Walcott and North Walsham to help young people develop their 'band' and performance skills.
8. Held the Greenbuild green lifestyle event hosting a range of exhibitors, from renewable technologies and sustainable construction techniques to information and advice on green building and renovation, gardening and saving energy. A record 8,500 people attended the event in 2013.
9. Launched a community dog warden scheme to crack down on dog fouling across the district.
10. Council Deputy Leader Rhodri Oliver named 'Young Councillor of the Year'.
-  11. Approved funding of £100,000 for four playground improvement schemes.
12. Successfully concluded negotiations with Cromer Town Council in relation to the future ownership and management of North Lodge Park. This will provide the opportunity for the local community to achieve long-term benefits for the park and its users and will put decisions about how the park is maintained in the hands of local people

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The Council plans to:

1. Continue to explore opportunities provided by the Localism agenda to transfer assets to other bodies which can in turn often access funding streams not available to the Council. This can result in significant improvements and local benefits such as with the Wells Maltings project.
2. Ensure funding remains available through the return of the Second Homes Council Tax to support local initiatives through the Big Society Fund.



Above: £225,000 awarded to Big Society Fund projects.

Left: Tom FitzPatrick and Sheila Oxtoby signing the Hate Free Norfolk pledge

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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 2013/14 towards meeting the priority:

1. Approved a £1.4m Business Transformation Programme including an IT Strategy and Customer Management Strategy.
2. Identified savings and additional income in 2014/15 of £581k.
3. Completed an agreement with Norfolk County Council's Children's Services Northern Area Team to occupy part of the Cromer building, maximising the use of the building and achieving a future income stream of £70,000 per annum.
4. Continued to pursue large scale debt assertively and recover costs and expenses from those people we prosecute and enforce against so that Council Tax payers do not bear the costs.
5. Achieved the highest level of assurance for the management of the Freedom of Information and the Data Protection Act compliance during audit this year.
6. Been shortlisted for the Municipal Journal 'Legal Excellence' Award 2014.
7. Introduced self-service for employees which enables staff to view their personal employment information electronically. Further changes will take place during 2014 to streamline processes which will create further efficiencies across the organisation.
8. Of the eleven decisions made as a result of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman ten found no fault with the Council.
9. Successfully delivered the front reception refurbishment project which has resulted in a far better working environment and has helped achieve cashable savings of £54,000 per annum.
10. Achieved slightly lower staff sickness levels of 6.77 days per full time equivalent member of staff than the previous year (6.80).
11. Retained Investor in People (IIP) accreditation at bronze level showing the Council's commitment to developing its staff.
12. Exceeded the target in the collection of business rates, achieving 99.14% against a target of 99.00%.
13. Successfully launched the Coastshare cost sharing group in October 2014 and promoted it as an example of good practice.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The Council plans to:

1. Continue to derive maximum benefit from its asset portfolio, minimising operating costs wherever possible and maximising income streams which will help to address the forecast budget deficit.
2. Deliver the Business Transformation Programme.



Left: Opening of Coastshare

Right: eastlaw won the MJ achievement award for Legal Services Team of the Year

eastlaw
efficiency. economy. expertise

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2014

FINALIST 

Below: The opening of the refurbished reception



Financial summary

Despite continued funding reductions and the impact of the tidal surge in December 2013, the Council has achieved a surplus for the year of just over £119,000. This is partly due to additional income received and where services have achieved savings above the level budgeted.

The overall position continues to demonstrate sound financial management by the Council and is a good position for North Norfolk District Council to be in when taking into account further funding reductions all Local Authorities continue to be faced with. Prudent financial planning and management remain key.

The surplus for the year has been transferred to the general reserve to mitigate the financial implications of the December tidal surge.

Costs of just over £1million have been incurred in the 2013/14 year in relation to the tidal surge. These have been funded from a number of external sources including insurance claims, government grant for the Severe Weather Recovery Scheme, the Bellwin scheme (for emergency financial assistance) and funding from the Environment Agency which has been secured for repairs to some of the damaged sea defences. There is still anticipated to be further works totalling £1.8 million to be completed during 2014/15, for which funding is anticipated from a number of sources including insurance claims, existing NNDC funding and other external grants. Should the Environment Agency funding application of £276,000 for 2014/15 be successful, the residual cost to the Council is estimated to be £525,000 in 2014/15. This has been budgeted for to be met from the general reserve.

Given the current economic environment and the introduction of Localised Council Tax Support the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates has been challenging. The Council Tax collected for the year was only slightly below target (at 98.1% compared to the target of 98.3%), and for Business Rates slightly above target (99.1% compared to the target of 99.0%).

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 just over £4.8m in the year, involving a range of projects including coast protection, housing and infrastructure and asset related projects.

Some capital projects have been reprofiled to future financial years where schemes were not able to commence or be completed within the planned timeframes. Housing capital schemes amounted to just under £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 Big Society Enabling projects of £112,000, structural works on Cromer Pier of £589,000, various coastal protection works of £2.07million including just under £700,000 following the tidal surge damage.

Reserves and Balances

The Council currently has a policy of maintaining the general reserve balance at a minimum of £1.75million; at the end of 2013/14 after allowing for the in-year surplus, the general reserve balance stood at just over £1.8million although this is due to reduce to just over £1.6million by the end of March 2015. The reason for the reduced balance is due to the residual costs related to the tidal surge which are expected to require funding in 2014/15.

In addition to the general reserve, 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 2014 was £8.5million, of which there is planned usage over the coming year of just over £1.8 million. All reserves and balances along with current commitments are reviewed annually.

In addition to revenue reserves there is a further balance of capital receipts of approximately £6.2 million. Capital receipts are generated from asset sales and must be used to finance capital expenditure. The current balance of capital receipts has been earmarked to finance approved capital schemes within the medium term capital programme. Until the capital receipts are drawn down for financing, the balance along with all other reserves earns investment income which supports the revenue account.

Over the late summer/early 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 in preparation of the 2015/16 budget.



Annual Report 2013/14

Small Government Big Society

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www.northnorfolk.org

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