



NORTH
NORFOLK
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Corporate Plan
2019 - 2023

Introduction from Councillor Sarah Bütikofer, Leader of the District Council

North Norfolk is a fantastic place to live, work and visit – covering over 360 sq miles of coastal and rural environment, with a population of over 100,000 people living in 120 distinct communities, our District is one of England’s top holiday destinations and a place where people positively choose to live, with large numbers of people retiring to the area.

However, despite these positive attributes we also have some big challenges: – responding to environmental change, increasing housing supply, supporting economic growth, meeting the challenges of service delivery to rural communities and the needs of both our young people and a rapidly ageing population.

Our Corporate Plan sets out our vision for the Council and its work over the next four years. It reflects the essential needs and aspirations of our customers and communities and how we feel the Council can best use its resources to deliver services and outcomes that make a positive difference for everyone who lives in, works in or visits North Norfolk.

We have therefore identified six key themes where we would propose developing actions and allocating resources to respond to the challenges our district faces in the years to come:-

- Local Homes for Local Need
- Boosting Business Sustainability and Growth
- Customer Focus
- Climate, Coast and the Environment
- Financial Sustainability and Growth
- Quality of Life

Local Homes for Local Need

North Norfolk has a diverse range of homes from character properties in town and rural settings, 1970s/80s estate development of bungalows and family homes through to more modern developments of housing for the Over 55s and bespoke homes of contemporary design.

With a local housing market driven by strong demand for second and holiday homes and people wishing to retire to the area, however many local people on average wages struggle to access the housing market through being able to afford a home of their own. Further, the availability of private rented accommodation is lower than in many other areas of the country due to the higher returns investors can make renting accommodation for holiday lets.

This means that North Norfolk has many households who wish to access social housing, shared ownership properties and homes in the private rented sector; together with rising numbers of households in temporary accommodation. Our ageing population also means that we have a high level of need for Housing with Care / Extra Care to allow people to live independently but in an environment where they can access care support in line with their personal needs.

Delivering Local Homes for Local Need will therefore be a priority for the Council over the next four years. In ensuring the homes we need are delivered we will maintain a high quality in terms of design. In addition, by ensuring new homes are built with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, we will make them more affordable to live in.

We will deliver on this objective by:-

- Developing and adopting a new Local Plan
- Developing and implementing a new Housing Strategy
- Developing and implementing a new Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy and Action Plan
- Developing a housing delivery / development company
- Delivering new affordable homes both directly as a Council and through partnership working with Registered Providers
- Working with partners to deliver 500 units of Housing with Care / Extra Care

Contextual data:-

- Ratio of mean house prices to median gross annual earnings (affordability gap) – 9.8 in North Norfolk (highest of any local authority in Norfolk) against an England value of 8 in 2018.
- Dwelling completions as a proportion of existing households – Rate per 1000 2018/19 – North Norfolk 5.5 (4th out of seven Norfolk authorities) against an England average of 7.2
- Nos. and cost to the Council of placing people in temporary accommodation

Sources of evidence / measuring impact:-

- Trends of average house prices / affordability index
- No of new homes built – Planning data / CT1 form
- No of new homes built by the Council - annually
- No of Empty Homes – annually against trend
- No of people on Housing Register

Boosting Business Sustainability and Growth

The North Norfolk economy has traditionally been based upon employment in the agricultural, manufacturing, tourism, care and local service provision sectors – largely in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. Whilst the District has high levels of employment amongst people of working age, local wages and incomes fall behind England and East of England averages.

In recent years businesses in the tourism sector, particularly, have invested in the quality of the accommodation and visitor offer. This has reduced the level of seasonality of employment through the development of short-breaks and niche products based on the District's high quality natural environment and independent accommodation and retail offer.

However, there are challenges in the wider economy through the limited availability of serviced sites and premises and access to fast broadband and mobile coverage and in some areas utility provision, all of which hold back investment in other sectors. This includes homeworking and new business start-ups in emerging sectors of the economy, such as the digital and creative sectors, which are seen as opportunities for the District given the quality of our environment, diverse housing stock, lack of congestion and high quality of life.

In common with many other areas, the District's towns also face challenges in adapting to the changing trends of the retail and financial services sectors and the impact this is having on local "high" streets.

The Council is ambitious in wanting to support a strong local economy and new job-creating investment which strengthens and broadens the business base and employment opportunities in the District. The District has strengths in the Agri-Food / Agri-Tech and Clean Energy sectors and wants to promote the future success of businesses operating in these sectors in alignment with the priorities identified by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and emerging Norfolk and Suffolk Local Industrial Strategy. The Council remains concerned that many --

of the impacts of offshore wind energy developments will be felt by the District, with few, if any, direct benefits being seen by the local community. The Council would therefore hope that regional partners will recognise the specific issues faced by our economy particularly with respect to the challenges of providing serviced sites, broadband and mobile coverage.

The Council is committed to working alongside partners in the education and business sectors in promoting inclusive growth which seeks to match the skills of the local workforce with the needs of local businesses.

We will deliver on this objective by:-

- Developing and adopting a new Local Plan
- Developing and implementing of new Economic Growth Strategy
- Taking a proactive approach to unlocking development sites and enabling local businesses to grow across the District
- Better understanding the needs of local businesses
- Providing support and advice for new business start-ups and growing businesses
- Encouraging links between local education providers, apprentices and businesses
- Facilitating the transition of our town centres to be places which are attractive and accessible for living, working and for leisure

Contextual data:-

- Proportion of employees in District earning below Living Wage Foundation Rates 2018 – North Norfolk 30.70% (joint second highest in Norfolk against an England average of 22.90%)
- Employment Rate of 16-64 year olds 2018/19 - North Norfolk 78% (third highest in Norfolk) against England average of 76%
- No.of enterprises with turnover in excess of £1million – 8.38% against an England average of 9.25%
- No of new businesses surviving more than three years – North Norfolk 67.14%, as against an England average of 61.37%

Sources of evidence / measuring impact:-

- Number of businesses advised
- Levels of business investment made in the district
- Vitality of our town centres (measured by number of empty retail / commercial units)
- Numbers of people unemployed and monitoring of “hard-to-fill” vacancies
- Trends of average wages / incomes

Customer Focus

The North Norfolk district covers an area of 360 sq miles and has a population of over 100,000 people living in 121 distinct communities and settlements. Whilst our offices are centrally located in Cromer, public transport across the District is limited and many of our residents and customers find accessing the Council offices difficult. Our customers are also not a single group of people with common interests – we provide a diverse range of services, both directly and through contractors and partner organisations, and our customers and service users are not only local residents, but also tourist visitors and local businesses.

We will make the Council's services as easy to access as possible and will use a variety of channels to facilitate this – through self-service via the Council's website, and also for customers making personal visits to the Council's offices, or communicating with us by letter, telephone and online. Where we provide services in the community – eg. tourism infrastructure, public car parks and conveniences, leisure centres, refuse and recycling collections, we want our services to be recognised as being of good quality, inclusive and responsive to customer needs.

We want our customers to be at the heart of everything we do and will strive to improve access to our services further through stronger community engagement, developing more formal mechanisms of inviting customer feedback and comment and, where possible and practical, seek to deliver our services at a more local level through strengthening partnerships with local Town and Parish Councils. The Council will seek further to improve democratic engagement and participation by people of all ages, but particularly through working with schools and colleges to ensure that the voice young people is heard and informs council decision-making.

We will deliver on this objective by:-

- Developing a new Customer Charter with published service standards
- Undertaking an annual residents survey and responding to results
- Developing an Engagement Strategy to set out how we will consult with our customers and our local communities through strengthening our relationships with Town and Parish Councils
- Establishing a mechanism for stronger engagement with young people
- Undertaking more benchmarking of the Council's services to learn from best practice elsewhere

Contextual data:-

- No. of people casting votes in the 2017 Local Elections – 40.78% of electors in North Norfolk (highest local authority figure in Norfolk) against an England average of 35%.

Sources of evidence / measuring impact:-

- Levels of customer satisfaction measured through formal surveys or feedback mechanisms
- Number of complaints and compliments, including referrals to the LG&SCO
- Nos of people participating in community engagement / consultation processes
- Developing the Council's engagement mechanisms with town and parish councils

Climate, Coast and the Environment

North Norfolk has an outstanding natural rural and coastal environment, which makes the District a fantastic place to live, work and visit – our natural environment underpins our appeal as a popular holiday destination. The northern reaches of the Norfolk Broads network lie within the District and approximately 20% of the District forms part of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The district also has 80 Conservation Areas which recognise the strong character of the local built environment, as well as six Blue Flag beaches and three Green Flag parks and open spaces.

However, the District is at the frontline of climate change with its 45 miles of coastline under threat from storm surge inundation, cliff slippage and erosion, and loss of beaches: all associated with rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events, and all requiring us to the changes these bring.

In the medium-term there is concern over the future quality of the Broads landscape and environment through rising sea levels and falling ground-water levels, the latter of which also has an impact on the District's economy as agricultural water abstraction licences are under review in the east of the District potentially requiring significant changes in agricultural practice.

For these reasons the Council declared a Climate Emergency in April 2019 and has since committed resources to establish an Environmental Forum with the objective of informing the development and implementation of an Environmental Charter. In turn this will lay out how we will lead community adaptation and reduce the Council's impact on the environment.

The Council is seeking to respond to these challenges positively, leading by example, such as its leadership in the development and delivery of the UK first Bacton and Walcott Coastal Management "Sandscaping" scheme and through installing photovoltaic panels on the roof of the Council's main office building delivering ongoing financial savings and reducing the authority's carbon footprint.

We will deliver on this objective by:-

- Developing and implementing an Environmental Charter and Action Plan
- Developing and implementing a new Local Plan
- Undertaking an audit to establish the Council's baseline carbon footprint and then deliver a carbon neutral position by 2030.
- Continuing to take a lead role nationally in coastal management initiatives recognising our position as a "frontline" authority in meeting the challenge of rising sea levels
- Planting 110,000 trees – one for each resident – to help offset our carbon emissions
- Introducing Electric Vehicle Charging facilities in the Council's principal car parks, at its offices and leisure centres
- Delivering a new waste and recycling contract and providing leadership and education on waste minimisation and recycling

Contextual data:-

- Tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted per capita 2017 – North Norfolk 5.7 tonnes per person (Third highest local authority area in Norfolk) as against 5.9 tonnes per person England average
- Local authority waste sent for recycling, composting, re-use – North Norfolk 42% (Fourth highest local authority in Norfolk out of seven) against an England average of 43%.

Sources of evidence / measuring impact:-

- Carbon reduction audit and measurement
- No of trees planted per annum

Financial Sustainability and Growth

North Norfolk District Council is a debt-free authority and has a balanced budget. Over the past four years the Council has delivered over £2 million in financial savings and efficiencies at a time of reducing Government grants and increasing demand for services.

Looking forward the Council will need to be even more innovative in its approaches to maintaining and increasing service provision, building upon its record of robust financial management through identifying new sources of income, making sound investments and delivering high quality services in the most efficient way possible.

We will therefore continue to invest in our property assets to ensure they are providing the best return to us and will also need to take a more commercial approach to everything we do. This will mean us looking at different investment opportunities and being prepared to take innovative and creative approaches to how we invest in the future – recognising that through our investments we might be able to realise wider benefits for our District as detailed elsewhere in this Plan – in terms of housing, job and environmental outcomes, as well as delivering a financial return. In essence we will need to work smarter in maintaining the Council's sound finances whilst delivering better for our residents and communities.

We will deliver on this objective by:-

- Continuously reviewing our service delivery arrangements, fees and charges to ensure that we deliver value for money
- Taking, where appropriate, a more commercial approach to the delivery of discretionary services
- Forming a housing delivery / development company to take our property ambitions forward
- Investing in environmental and economic initiatives which deliver positive outcomes and a financial return for the authority
- Working with other local authorities to explore loopholes which exist around Second Home Council Tax / Business Rate payments

Contextual data:-

- Band D Council Tax 19/20 - £148.77, lowest quartile for English District authorities

Sources of evidence / measuring impact:-

- Delivery of balanced budget annually moving forward

Quality of Life

North Norfolk is a wonderful place to live and work, with strong and vibrant communities and most of our residents enjoying a good quality of life. Many people living in the District have chosen to live here – moving to the area for retirement, based on their previous enjoyment of the District as tourist visitors.

However, our rural and coastal location with many small village communities, does present some challenges in terms of our residents being able to access services, particularly for the young, old and people with poor health or a disability, who might not have access to personal transport and find it difficult to access a wide variety of public services. Public transport in large parts of the District is limited and expensive and can influence the post-16 education choices of young people, as well as their ability to access jobs and socialise.

Further, our ageing population – the District has the highest average age of any local authority area in England (48 years 11 months); means that increasing numbers of people experience social isolation as they age and the District Council and its partners are committed to improving the wellbeing of older people through social prescribing and promoting the development of Housing with Care / Extra Care provision where people can live independently for longer with opportunities for social interaction.

The Council has a strong record of providing and supporting facilities and activities which improve local people's mental wellbeing and quality of life – including provision of sports and leisure centres, provision of tourist infrastructure, public conveniences, Blue Flag beaches, Green Flag open spaces and country parks and support for cultural events in locations across the District; and, within the financial constraints the Council operates within it is committed to maintaining and enhancing such facilities for the future as they form an essential element of the District's appeal as a place to live and visit.

The Council also works with a wide range of partners through a variety of mechanisms to provide support to and improve the quality of life of vulnerable

people and households in the District. This is achieved through working with a large number of public sector organisations – including Norfolk County Council, the NHS, Public Health, the police and other protective services, the Department of Work and Pensions, as well as the voluntary and charitable sectors. The Council will continue to take a lead role in the development and strengthening of these multi-agency partnership arrangements to ensure the continued “local” delivery of these important support services. This will be achieved through the Council engaging with key partners, particularly in the health and social care sectors, to ensure the needs of our communities are understood and in maintaining and developing local service provision through shared office arrangements, integrated referral arrangements and innovative delivery using new technologies and practice where appropriate.

We will deliver on this objective by:-

- Undertaking a Quality of Life Survey to inform the development and implementation of a Quality of Life Strategy so as to improve the health and mental wellbeing of communities and individuals across North Norfolk.
- Developing and implementing a Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Developing and implementing a Sports Strategy for the District
- Developing and implementing an Accessibility Guide for the District
- Delivery of new leisure centre at Sheringham
- Continued investment in Cromer Pier as an iconic heritage and cultural attraction
- Public convenience investment programme to include a Changing Places facility in each of our seven principal settlements
- Delivery of the North Walsham Heritage Action Zone programme
- Continued commitment to maintain Blue Flag and Green Flag status for the Council's beaches and open spaces
- Delivery of the Mammoth Marathon
- Maximising the level of external funding through working with partners to support community projects within the District

Contextual data:-

- Annual North Norfolk Health Profile
- Index of Multiple Deprivation score - (High is Bad) - North Norfolk 21.34 as against an England value of 22.0
- Healthy life expectancy - 67.0 years for females in North Norfolk against an England average of 64.77 years; whilst males is 64.6 for North Norfolk as against 63.49 England average.
- Minutes on average to reach 8 key services (employment, primary school, secondary school, further education, GP, hospital, food store and town centre) by walking or public transport - North Norfolk figure 29 minutes as against 17.70 minutes for England as a whole
- In North Norfolk 71.8% of adults are physically active, against an England average of 66.26%

Sources of evidence / measuring impact:-

- Number of users of our leisure centres
- Number of visits to Cromer Museum
- Number of visits to Sheringham Little Theatre
- Number of Blue Flag beaches and Green Flag open spaces
- Level of investment made in upgrading our public conveniences
- Number of Changing Places facilities provided