



Scrutiny committee

Date: **Thursday, 20 March 2025**
Time: **16:30**
Venue: **Mancroft room City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH**

Committee members:

Councillors:

Wright (Chair)
Galvin (Vice Chair)
Carrington
Catt
Davis
Fox
Fulton-McAlister
Osborn
Padda
Prinsley
Sands (M)
Smith

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Agenda

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1	Apologies To receive apologies for absence	
2	Declarations of interest (Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting)	
3	Minutes To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 23 January 2025 and 30 January 2025.	5 - 18
4	Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation – draft Norwich City Council response Purpose - To consider Norwich City Council's draft response to the Government consultation on Norfolk and Suffolk devolution plans, as published on 17 February 2025.	19 - 36
5	Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-2025 Purpose - To assist scrutiny committee members to review the scrutiny committee work programme 2024-25.	37 - 42
6	Report from the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee To receive an update from the Council's representative on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	

EXEMPT ITEMS:

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and the public.)

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an agenda item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 or it being confidential for the purposes of Section 100A(2) of that Act.

In each case, members are asked to decide whether, in all circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Date of publication: **Wednesday, 12 March 2025**



Scrutiny Committee

16:32 to 18:03

Thursday, 23 January 2025

Present: Councillors Wright (Chair), Galvin (Vice-Chair), Carrington, Davis, Maguire (substitute for Prinsley), Padda, Osborn, Sands (M) (substitute for Harper) and Smith

Apologies: Councillors Catt, Fox, Fulton-McAlister, Harper and Prinsley

In attendance: Councillor Stonard, Leader of the Council

Davina Howes, Executive Director of Communities and Housing
Jan Robinson, Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Helen Chamberlin, Head of Strategy Engagement and Culture
Emma Smith, Senior Strategy Officer

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED, to approve the accuracy of the public and exempt minutes of the meetings held on 10 October 2024 and 12 December 2024 and of the extraordinary meeting held on 7 November 2024.

3. We are Norwich Business Plan

The Leader of the Council introduced the report. He was proud to present the draft Business Plan to the Scrutiny Committee based on the ambitions within the Council's community-led plan We are Norwich which had been adopted by the Council in March 2024. The Business Plan was more than a list of projects but included the leadership to deliver change for the city and its residents. The priorities and guiding principles that had been agreed as part of the community-led plan We are Norwich were reflected throughout the plan.

The city faced numerous challenges including the cost of living crisis and climate change and the Council would address the challenges head on. The Business Plan was moving to an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach to demonstrate the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability. It would provide value to communities including partner organisations. He welcomed feedback on the draft to refine the plan.

The Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture presented the report using slides (which are available [here](#)). The community-led plan We are Norwich had been based on outcomes based which enabled to build the OBA approach taken for the Business Plan. This approach had been built and trialled over the previous years with a number of service areas. The approach was different to traditional methods of measuring performance. The approach generally was as follows:

1. Identification of outcomes.
2. Development of a logic model to connect results to actions.
3. Development of KPIs to monitor the delivery of the outcomes.

The KPIs would be monitored on a more regular basis which would enable the Council to intervene earlier to correct course. The OBA model suggests that targets are within three domains and that KPIs should be a mixture of qualitative and quantitative. The KPIs could change over the course of reaching the outcomes and a balance needed to be struck between adaptability and steady reporting.

The approach had been trialled with the Customer and Digital Strategy and other service areas such as Environmental Strategy. And the learnings from this trialled would be rolled out across the organisation. The Business Plan was aligned to the proposed budget for 2025-2026. Once the approach had been fully embedded it was hoped that the Business Plan would be an iterative process to ensure that it could respond to emerging needs, such as devolution and local government reorganisation. Collaboration was crucial in developing the plan and the work with partners to deliver for the residents of Norwich.

Members commented that they were supportive of the OBA approach as they felt that this would enable better monitoring of the Council's performance and how it was delivering for residents and could sit alongside more traditional forms of monitoring.

A member commented that they would provide more detailed feedback through email as she was involved in the development of logic models as part of her employment. Consideration should be given on the resources required to deliver the outputs and providing more detail on the inputs and outputs.

In response to a member's question the Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture confirmed that the citywide engagement piece had been for the community-led plan We are Norwich which had been a significant change in approach. The work to define the Reducing Inequalities Target Areas (RITAs) was being finalised and the Strategy team was working with the Community Enabling Team to work with community groups and residents on these.

A member commented that the Business Plan did not include any reference to outcomes of the addressing digital exclusion by upskilling residents who were not able to access technology.

The Chair asked whether consideration could be given to updating the KPI target for system down time as this was currently based on availability excluding and scheduled down time. The Executive Director of Communities and Housing said that this was something that could be explored.

A member asked for clarity why some corporate priorities had less detailed KPIs and outcomes than other. The Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture confirmed that the areas that had more defined outcomes had already gone through OBA and this would be developed and worked through on an iterative process across the Council. The process would be over a period of time to work through this across the organisation and areas would be added back into the plan before the end of the period covered by the plan.

The Senior Strategy Officer confirmed that the Council was taking a testing approach and worked with areas that were in a better state of readiness. An example of this was the Environmental Strategy team who were working the Strategy team to develop KPIs and testing these, including the use of existing data sources and how regularly these would need to be monitored. The KPIs would be tested internally to understand whether they measured progress against outcomes. The Norwich Climate Commission had been involved in the development of the outcomes and KPIs related to the “A climate responsive Norwich” programme.

A member commented that he believed that the guiding principles should be reconsidered and reworded. The Leader confirmed that the guiding principles had been based on the adopted community-led plan We are Norwich. Any changes to these would need to be agreed by Full Council and the intention for the guiding principles was that they provided an overarching aspiration for the five years that the community-led plan was in place.

In response to a member’s question the Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture confirmed that actions and outcomes related to race and ethnicity were addressed within the Council’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

A member commented that it was not clear how many outcomes had been brought into the new plan and asked for clarity as to why the approach would be different. The Executive Director of Communities and housing responded that the Business Plan brought together actions and delivery. The plan included actions that had been agreed and articulated what would be delivered. The way in which progress would be reported would be different to older models and several of the actions within the plan would be familiar as they had been actions that had been committed to. He suggested that the Audit Committee could consider the delivery and ways of working. In response to a follow up question the Executive Director of Communities and Housing said that individual actions within the plan would have an associated engagement plan and strategy to ensure that residents understood what the Council was delivering.

A member expressed concern that existing KPIs and data sets would not be transferred over. The Executive Director of Communities and Housing confirmed that some data sources would be transferred over into the new KPIs, this would not mean that the Council would only be using new data sets. The Government and other organisations required the Council to record and report on a variety of data due to requirements related to funding. The data sets would continue to be used in the background to monitor and track trends.

Councillor Galvin provided an update on the work of the Making Norwich a Truly Accessible City Task and Finish Group, the group had had its first meeting. She suggested that the OBA model could be considered for the recommendations from the group.

A member asked for clarity on the progress of aligning the budget and the priorities within the community-led plan. The Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture confirmed that work was ongoing with the finance team. This work was complicated and the focus was currently on setting the budget for 2025-2026.

In response to a member comment the Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture said that the business plan currently commented on responding to the Government's white paper and was not specifically around a unitary authority for Norwich. Members commented that they felt that this should be included within the document.

A member asked for clarity on the meaning of "review" as several actions used this wording. The Head of Strategy, Engagement and Culture said that this could mean different things in differing actions as they related to differing things. Members commented that it would be helpful to provide a definition of "review" and "develop" so it was clear what the Council would be doing with associated timelines and timescales for these reviews.

A member commented that the Scrutiny Committee could consider the financial mapping at a future meeting and that this could be scoped further.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to recommend to Cabinet:

- 1) To endorse the approach that has been taken for the We are Norwich Business Plan
- 2) To include wording within the narrative of the Business Plan that the Council is committed to a unitary authority for the Norwich urban area.
- 3) To clarify what is mean by "review" and "develop" within the actions of the Business Plan
- 4) That timescales and timelines for when reviews will be completed are included in the plan
- 5) To encourage partners and elected members to be involved in developing Outcome Based Accountability (OBAs) Key Performance Indicators (KPSs).
- 6) To consider including an outcome on working with community groups to break down digital exclusion by upskilling residents or providing equipment.
- 7) To ask officers to provide a template for developing OBAs for the work of the Making Norwich a Truly Accessible City Task and Finish Group
- 8) That the monitoring framework is accessible to the public.
- 9) To ensure that any existing data sets are retained and where possible maintained.

RESOLVED, unanimously, that the Scrutiny Committee considers the progress of aligning financial models with the delivery of services as part of a future meeting.

4. Scoping Document – Communicating with the Council – January 2025

The Chair introduced the report. He and the Vice-Chair had met with officers before the committee meeting and discussed this item. The suggestion was that a report

would be brought to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting on the items within the scoping document and the questions submitted by Councillor Davis. The scoping document was based on a motion to council that had been referred from Council to Scrutiny Committee and progress had been made against a number of the actions within the motion. The report would provide members with updates on these and the Committee could then consider whether further review was required for any areas that had not been addressed.

RESOLVED to ask officers to provide a report detailing progress against the actions within the motion as detailed in the scoping document and the questions submitted by Councillor Davis.

(The Chair closed the meeting).

CHAIR



Scrutiny Committee

16:30 to 18:30

Thursday, 30 January 2025

Present: Councillors Wright (Chair), Calvert (substitute for Galvin), Champion (substitute for Fox) Carrington, Davis, Fulton-McAlister, Harper, Padda, and Smith

Apologies: Councillors Galvin (Vice-Chair), Catt, Fox, Prinsley and Osborn

In attendance: Councillor Stonard, Leader of the Council
Councillor Kendrick, Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council

Louise Rawsthorne, Chief Executive
Alistair Rush, Interim Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer)
Jan Robinson, Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Robert Mayes, Head of Finance
Shaun Flaxman, Senior Finance Business Partner

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. The council's provisional 2025-2026 and medium-term financial strategy

The Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council introduced the report. The meeting was an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to ask technical questions on the budget. The proposed budget was balanced against a background of financial difficulties for the local government sector which was a credit to the management of the budget by officers and the administration.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer presented the report using slides (which are available [here](#)).

Section 1 - Strategic overview

The budget was being set under a new Government that had announced that there would be significant reform to the way in which local government would operate, including a return to multi-year settlements in future financial years, this would better enable the Council to plan for the medium-term as it created more certainty. A review of the local government finance system would take place alongside a review of business rates. The Government had reviewed the grant distribution system which had introduced the recovery grant. With Devolution and Local Government being a consideration, this would have large implication for the Council as a local authority in

a two-tier area and a period of significant change over the next few years was imminent.

The local government finance settlement for 2025-2026 was a roll-over settlement for Norwich City Council, which meant that the overall position would be a break-even position in terms of funding stream. The Council had also had confirmation from the Government that it would recompense local authorities for the increase in National Insurance Contributions (NIC). This would not cover aspects of the supply chain that the Council commissioned services from third parties. In the context of Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) the council would be recompensing NIC as it was a wholly owned company.

Section 2 - General Fund

As part of the budget setting process for the General Fund the Council had reviewed its statutory duties and contractual commitments which had identified growth and a reduction in come of £2.66 million. This growth and the impact of inflation would be funded through additional income and savings of £3.2 million. Appendix 2(e) of the report detailed these proposals. To support the balanced budget and the Council's core spending a Council Tax increase of 2.99% was proposed. This was the maximum increase that the Council could apply without a referendum. Core spending power was an important measure as this was how the Government measured the available resources that a local authority had available, which impacted the calculation of any funding from Government. This did not include any precepts from Norfolk County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner, due to the timing of the Council's budget Council meeting a further meeting was required on 25 February 2025 for the Council to make its statutory Council Tax resolution.

Reserves

Short-term growth proposals would be funded from reserves to reflect the one-off nature of the expenditure, there was a proposal to merge the earmarked Invest-to-Save and Business Change reserves as these were looking to achieve similar outcomes. These reserves were designed to provide opportunities to invest in services to make these more efficient where new ways of working may not be enough to drive efficiencies. It was also proposed to create a Feasibility Earmarked Reserve of £0.5 million as it was recognised that there was significant change for the Council in a number of areas and the Council needed to understand the feasibility of any proposed changes and the related viability of these changes. Reserves remained health and would be kept under review as these could only be used once, reserves would be replenished where possible from underspends.

Consultation

The consultation on the budget for 2025-2026 had seen a significant response rate compared to 2024-2025. There had been over 2000 responses, it was not possible to detail whether this had been representative of the population of Norwich as a whole as that level of data was not available.

The consultation had been centred on five budget pledges. A majority of respondents had said that they loved Norwich as a place live, work and visit and a majority were in favour of the Council's investment approach in services. 50% of respondents had been supportive of the increase in Council Tax while 30% had been against the increase. In terms of how well the Council delivered services

respondents were split down the middle and there was a marginal opposition on increasing fees and charges.

Section 3 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The proposed gross expenditure for 2025-2026 was £80.252 million with a gross income budget of £83.191 million. The prudent minimum level of HRA reserves was £5.848 million. This budget would be supported by an increase to rents by Consumer Price Index (CPI) + 1% which was in line with the rent setting standard and had been adopted by the Council for a number of years. For the 2025-2026 financial year this would be 2.7% as it was based on the CPI in September. Rents were crucial to fund the HRA and the services and improvements associated with this. There was a recognition that the Council's rents were relatively low in comparison to other local authorities. The average increase in rent would be £2.62 per week. It was also proposed to increase garage rents by 2.7%.

Section 4 - Capital Programmes

The total cost of the general fund capital programme for 2025-2026 was £29.933 million and a proposed five-year capital programme of £46.67 million. The HRA capital programme was ringfenced to fund improvements in the Council's housing stock and building new homes. This was proposed as £37.520 million for 2025-2026 and £231.044 million over the five-year period to 2030.

Section 5 - Treasury Management Strategy

The Head of Finance presented this section and highlighted that the contribution that Treasury Management made to the Council was significant. The Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) was key in setting the framework for delivery on how the Council managed its cash. Governance arrangements for this were critical as the TMS set out the levels and boundaries including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for the Council's borrowing and investment strategies. Cash balances remained healthy which were invested to maximise cash returns. The Council's borrowing strategy was to internally borrow wherever possible due to the high cost of borrowing. A large HRA loan of £50 million would be maturing in March 2026 and the strategy for this loan was to repay and delay refinancing into the financial year 2026-2027. As part of the TMS the Council was looking at increasing the amount of money held in Ethical, Sustainable Governance (ESG) funds wherever possible. A key driver was ensuring that any investments complied with regulations in terms of value for money and liquidity.

Section 7 – Chief Financial Officers statement

This was the statement issued by the s151 officer in line with section 25 and was a key part of the internal control framework. This was the s151 officer's opinion on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves. The statement aimed to provide assurance on the state of the financial health of the Council and identified risks that the Council faced and the strength of the Council's finances. The Interim Chief Finance Officer said that his opinion was that robust estimates had been made as the Council had reviewed statutory duties and contractual arrangements that underlay the budget pressures. The savings proposed in the budget were deliverable and achievable within the timescales. The Council's finances were healthy which was contrasted to other local authorities, as the Council had healthy levels of reserves and investments that support the funding of services. While some authorities had

issued section 114 notices others were seeking exceptional financial support from Government to maintain service delivery.

The Chair highlighted the importance of maximising core spending power and why this necessitated the maximum increase in Council Tax. The Council however would continue to maintain its general Council Tax Reduction Scheme for those residents that required it.

The Chair then suggested that members asked questions on each section of the report, starting with the budget consultation.

Questions on the budget consultation

A member asked for clarification on the consultation that had happened with trade unions in relation to the budget. The Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that there had been no specific consultation with the trade unions as these would take place when the implementation of any savings proposals would start. The Chief Executive in her capacity as Head of Paid Service confirmed that there was ongoing consultation and engagement with trade unions on a range of matters including the implementation of the budget. Mechanisms were in place for union and officer representation both formally and informally. If the implementation of the savings required changes to staffing, then these would be consulted on.

In response to a member question the Interim Chief Finance Officer said that there was no empirical evidence why the response rate was significantly higher than in previous year. The approach taken for 2025-2026 had been on framing it in the context of a conversations and the budget pledges that had been set. Learnings from previous years had also been incorporated to better understand the technicalities and looked to make documentation as accessible as possible. For the next financial year the process would start earlier, as it had been impacted by the General Election and the transition between staff. This would enable themes and topics to be explored in more detail and present this to members to feed into the future planning.

A member asked that the Equality Impact Assessment referenced in the report could be circulated. The Interim Chief Finance Officer said that this would be provided after the meeting. The assessment looked at the overarching impact of the budget as whole, individual proposals would require detailed Equality Impact Assessments.

A member asked for more detail on the process that had been used for the savings and growth proposals. In response the Interim Chief Finance Officer said that the finance team had sought input from service managers to understand what they identified as budget pressures and issues which were then prioritised in line with the MoSCoW method; Must Haves, Should Haves, Could Haves and Won't Haves. Prioritisation was given to statutory and contractual commitments on level of savings. Different funding streams and options had also been explored. Savings had been proposed by service managers including informed discussions of any implications.

In response to a member's comment officers confirmed that the link between the We Are Norwich Business Plan and the budget consultation would be built into the consultation approach to help residents understand the budget in the context of the Council's corporate priorities.

Members commented that the approach of texting members of the public had caused some concerns as it had been sent to people who no longer lived in Norwich

but were still listed as contacts in the system and that people had been concerned that the text was part of a scam. Officers confirmed that they would explore this and align work between finance, strategy, communications and other service areas to ensure that the response rate was maintained while ensuring that the right people received texts that made it clear that it was safe.

Questions on the General Fund

A member asked for clarification of the source of funding for agency staff spend. The Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that this would be funded from existing budgets in the first instance. Heads of Service and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) sought to fund this from the General Fund where possible except for staff working on projects where this project was funded from reserves. The unbudgeted spend would need to be met from the overall service budget while ensuring that front-line services. The Council had been working on reducing the agency spend by ensuring that requests for agency spend were appropriately challenged and questioned.

In response to a question the Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the Invest to Save Earmarked reserve had been used to fund specific projects and the balance would have some movement.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer assured members that the risk reserve in relation to Lion Homes (Norwich) Limited had been created as a prudent measure to cover the risk of the liability in relation to Lion Homes.

A member asked for confirmation of the benefits of being in a pooling arrangement for retained business rates. The Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that business rates were complicated, the Council collected business rates but did not retain the full amount. If the Council was not in a pool then a higher proportion of business rates would need to be paid to Government who would distribute this on different criteria. The income retained was not a significant level of income and pool set its own distribution approach and had recently reduced the amount the Council would retain.

In response to a member question the Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that capital investment in the asset in Telford was required as it generated an income for the Council. Periodic review and refurbishment of these assets was crucial to maximise income, and the return of investment would cover undertaking the refurbishment. Income from other properties would cover the short-term loss of income. The Council had chosen to invest in assets outside of Norwich to spread the risk of investing and allowed for the income to be reinvested in Norwich whether through direct or indirect services.

A member asked when the migration of residents from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit would be completed and the impact this would have on the service area. The Interim Chief Finance Officer said that he would provide this information outside of the meeting.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer responded to a member question and confirmed that in relation to the proposed growth in insurance was to seek to cover inflationary process at a broader level. A number of insurance policies had changed as a whole as insurers were not willing to insure at the same level. The service was looking at increasing skills within this area.

A member asked for clarification why the homelessness prevention fund was underspent by 90%. In response the Senior Finance Business Partner confirmed that this amount would be rolled into the reserves and utilised. Further information would be provided outside the meeting.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that in regard to the purchase of equipment for Norwich City Services Limited (NCSL) had been following discussions between NCSL and the Council. If the Council purchased the equipment this would be reflected in discounts of the service delivery and if contractors were to change this would ensure that the Council had the equipment for services to be delivered.

In response to a member question the Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the Council had a responsibility to maintain and improve the Provisions Market. Options were currently being explored to improve the market in future. The initial sum was reflective of the current state. The suggested amount to explore the development of the market including the viability and feasibility was a revenue cost. Any suggested improvements would become part of proposals for the capital programme. Ongoing repairs and maintenance costs would continue to be revenue funded as capital programme funds could only be used on new assets or enhancing assets.

The Chair asked for clarification on the degree of certainty on the projected spend for IT infrastructure. The Interim Chief Finance Officer said that the further into the future the less certainty was around any spend due to volatility. A number of internal assurances had been put in place to ensure that the figures were accurate and would continue to be challenged throughout the lifetime of the capital programme.

A member asked why the budget for solar thermal improvements had reduced. The Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that there were two elements to this, the budget in the HRA was around identifying appropriate locations to install these in. The Environmental Strategy Manager was exploring opportunities to ensure that the installation of solar would provide value for money for the Council in partnership with other organisations.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the pressure related to car parking income was due to the assumptions around income. The service was now looking at the financial modelling to ensure that lessons were learned and were exploring the level of activity at the Council's car parks. The previous model had assumed that the increase in volume of car parking would continue to increase.

Officers confirmed that the stock condition survey for the private rented sector would include both Houses in Multiple Occupancy and privately rented properties. The savings related to restructures were due to historical or recently implemented restructures which had delivered savings. These restructures took place in consultation with staff and the trade union.

Members raised concerns around moving the Citizen magazine online and the potential impact on residents. Officers assured members that these impacts would be explored as part of the review of Citizen magazine this would be considered before a decision would be brought to Cabinet.

Questions on the HRA

A member asked what the impact of inflation and interest rates would be on the HRA both in the medium and long term. The Interim Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the 30 year Business Plan would continue to be reviewed and updated over a long time frame to address the issues that may be encountered and was updated as there were economic changes. A wide range of factors are considered as part of the modelling to ensure this was balanced over its lifespan.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer responded to a member's question and confirmed that the Council was currently insulated from the increase in NIC due to existing contracts however when contracts were subject to renewal this would have an impact.

Members asked questions on a number of capital programmes within the HRA that had been underspent. Officers confirmed that some historic underspend had been due to the delay of works during the pandemic. There was also a labour and skill supply issue in Norwich and Norfolk which had slowed momentum. A capital board was in place to monitor spend more effectively to better understand where projects slipped behind. The service was looking at a large piece of procurement to have bigger contracts for the maintenance works to move these more swiftly. Through the completion of the stock condition survey the Council had a better understanding of the works required to properties and to better build a rolling programme of works.

In response to a request for clarification the Senior Finance Business Partner confirmed that the reference to the Government consultation on the rent increase was as Government had only extended the current standard for a further year. The Government was consulting on whether this should be extended for a further 5 years.

A member asked whether there had been an uplift in the Local Housing Allowance. Officers said that they would provide this information outside the meeting.

Officers clarified that the HRA Business Plan as a 30 year document provided an early warning system to provide a forecast on what would happen if things carried on as they currently did. To ensure that the stock was maintained investments had been incorporated into the budget in a way that would be balanced across the lifetime of the business plan. The HRA was a ring-fenced fund and it was best practice to produce a business plan to ensure that income from rents was spent on the benefit of tenants and that there was no cross-subsidy. In the context of Local Government Reorganisation, the ringfence would remain in place and be transferred over to any successor authority.

In response to a member question the Senior Finance Business Partner confirmed the projected amounts of properties lost to Right to Buy, the Government would be consulting on Right to Buy. An issue with Right to Buy receipts was the limits on how much could be used to spend on new council housing and the period in which it had to be spent.

Officer confirmed in response to member questions that the £1.5 million spend on Kings Court was because the Council owned the property, the reduction in planning and regulatory services' income had been due to delay in granting planning permission due to nutrient neutrality and that the reduction in community grants would not be removing or reducing support in relation to existing commitments.

RESOLVED, unanimously, to request that training be provided ahead of the next financial year on scrutinising the budget setting process.

(The Chair closed the meeting).

CHAIR



Committee name: Scrutiny

Committee date: 20/03/2025

Report title: Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation – draft Norwich City Council response

Portfolio: Councillor Stonard, Leader of the council

Report from: Chief executive

Wards: All wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To consider Norwich City Council's draft response to the Government consultation on Norfolk and Suffolk devolution plans, as published on 17 February 2025.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee consider Norwich City Council's draft response to the Government consultation on Norfolk and Suffolk devolution plans and provide its recommendations to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 2 April 2025, ahead of submission to the Government by the consultation closing date of 13 April.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- A prosperous Norwich.
- A fairer Norwich.
- A climate responsive Norwich.
- A future-proof Norwich.
- An open and modern council.

This report meets all the council's corporate priorities.

Report details

Introduction

1. This report invites the Scrutiny Committee to review Norwich City Council's draft response to the Government consultation on Norfolk and Suffolk devolution plans, attached at Appendix A, and to make recommendations to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 2 April 2025.
2. Before deciding whether to proceed with the necessary legislation, the Government is seeking input from residents, businesses, and stakeholders on proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Norfolk and Suffolk.
3. The consultation includes questions on:
 - a. The proposed geography of the MCCA
 - b. Governance and decision-making arrangements
 - c. The potential impacts and benefits of a combined authority structure for Norfolk and Suffolk.
4. Under the proposed governance model (Appendix B), district councils cannot be full constituent members of the MCCA. However, they may serve on committees and participate as non-constituent (non-voting) members. This reflects the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process, which will replace district councils with unitary authorities.
5. Norwich City Council could be appointed as a non-constituent member with the possibility of being granted voting rights at the discretion of the MCCA. If a Norwich unitary is established through LGR, Norwich would become a full constituent member with voting rights.
6. If approved by Parliament, the Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA would be established in time for the first mayoral election to take place in May 2026, with new unitaries across Norfolk scheduled to go live in May 2028.
7. As such, it is worth noting that if a Norwich unitary is established through LGR, there would be a period between the MCCA being established and unitaries across Norfolk being implemented, where Norwich may not have voting rights.
8. While LGR is a separate process, the consultation explicitly states that LGR is **not within the scope of this survey**. The consultation is open from 17 February to 13 April 2025.

The draft consultation response

9. The consultation seeks feedback on how the proposed Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA can drive improvements across key areas, including social outcomes, the economy, the environment, and local services. However, the potential impacts and benefits of the MCCA remain largely speculative at this stage.
10. As a result, most survey responses indicate that Norwich City Council supports the MCCA in principle, recognising the potential benefits of devolved powers and funding for people and places across the region.

11. However, the specific benefits for Norwich will depend on the MCCA's governance arrangements - particularly Norwich's ability to influence decision-making in relation to its urban priorities, challenges, and opportunities, as outlined in sections 4 and 5 of this report.

Consultation

12. The draft response to the Government's consultation on the proposed Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA has been shaped by extensive engagement and ongoing collaborative work to update the Greater Norwich Local Plan (2024), the Norwich Inclusive Economy Vision (2024), and the 'We are Norwich' community-led Plan (2024-2029), along with LGR proposals.

Implications

Financial and resources

13. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its community-led plan 'We are Norwich' and budget.

14. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources.

Legal

15. No legal implications have been identified in the development of Norwich City Council's draft response to the Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	This report does not have direct impacts for equality and diversity.
Health, Social and Economic Impact	This report does not have a direct health, social and economic impact.
Crime and Disorder	This report does not have direct impacts for crime and disorder.
Children and Adults Safeguarding	This report does not have direct impacts for children and adults safeguarding.
Environmental Impact	This report does not have a direct environmental impact.

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
Norwich may not have constituent membership in the proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority	Less focus within the Mayoral Combined County Authority around the power of cities to drive sustainable and equitable growth, leading to worse outcomes for Norfolk and the UK.	Develop a strong business case for a three unitary model for Norfolk to demonstrate impact on the Government's devolution and local government reorganisation ambitions.
Legal	No legal risks have been identified.	Not applicable

Other options considered

16. One option was to not respond to the Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation. However, this was not pursued, as it would mean missing the opportunity to highlight urban priorities, challenges, and opportunities to the Government. Engaging in the consultation ensures that Norwich's needs are considered when shaping the proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

17. This report, along with the appendix, provides the Scrutiny Committee with the necessary information to consider and formulate any recommendations to Cabinet regarding Norwich City Council's draft response to the Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation – draft Norwich City Council response


Appendix B - Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Combined County Authority – proposed governance arrangements

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Establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority across Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Norwich City Council support the proposal for a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) being established across the Norfolk and Suffolk geography. We believe local decision-makers, with their unique vantage points, expertise, and influence, are best positioned to shape policy and public service delivery effectively. This localised approach can unlock significant benefits for residents, neighbourhoods, and communities.

To deliver the full potential that devolution has to offer, it is crucial that decision-making processes and governance arrangements are genuinely collaborative. Principal authorities must be meaningfully involved and engaged, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered and that all areas of the county are fairly represented. With an effective partnership approach between central government, Strategic Authorities and local government, the MCCA could offer tailored solutions that recognise the distinct challenges and opportunities that affect the urban, rural and coastal communities across Norfolk and Suffolk.

During the transition period between the MCCA's establishment and any future Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), we believe every principal authority should hold a voting seat on the MCCA Board, alongside the elected Mayor. This interim arrangement would ensure local leaders are empowered to drive growth and raise living standards, aligning with core missions of the English Devolution White Paper.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- **Neither agree nor disagree**
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

The proposed governance model within the Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA would see decision-making exercised by four constituent members representing the councils of Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council. The proposal also sets out provisions for four non-constituent members to be appointed, with voting rights being granted at the discretion of the MCCA.

Norwich City Council recognises this would be an interim model whilst LGR is implemented. However, during this period, decision-making authority would be solely exercised by Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council. We believe a more inclusive governance model that aligns with the principles of devolution is needed from the outset. Such a model would better utilise the expertise local leaders have to offer and prevent Strategic Authorities from becoming isolated from the local communities that they serve.

The proposed governance arrangements also highlight that in due course, if a proposal is implemented, any new unitary councils will become the constituent members of the Combined County Authority and, legally, it will become a Combined Authority. With key strategic powers, functions and funding being transferred to the Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA, it is vital that Norwich has a strong voice and a seat at the table to represent the unique needs of our modern, growing, and ambitious urban centre.

Local government reorganisation, alongside devolution, presents a rare opportunity to design structures that genuinely work for places in a targeted way, rather than forcing a one-size-fits-all solution. A motion to support the creation of a new unitary authority for Greater Norwich on urban boundaries has the full backing of all city council's political leaders and a business case is being developed to take this proposal forward in line with government timeframes.

Alongside our Norfolk district colleagues, we would request that government consider agreeing:

1. The number of non-constituent members (per county) be increased to ensure equal representation for rural, urban and coastal areas.
2. Granting non-constituent members voting rights on issues that directly affect their area or where resources or capacity are required to deliver outcomes

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

A Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA should establish a clear economic role for each place within the wider region through their respective economic plans. This would allow local leaders to respond to their distinct needs, focus on future growth potential and meet the government's ambitions on housing delivery and economic growth.

Our ambition is for devolution and LGR to amplify the potential of a Greater Norwich on urban boundaries, recognising our role as the region's economic powerhouse with the potential to power activity and growth across the district and wider (proposed) devolved area.

Building on the Norwich 2040 City Vision which was launched in 2018, the Norwich 2040 Inclusive Economy Vision is a response to the latest evidence on Norwich's economy, labour market, and resident population. This has highlighted economic strengths including the city's thriving independent retail and leisure offer, capacity for growth, and nationally significant specialisms in sectors such as health, life sciences, and financial services.

The Inclusive Economy Vision is 15-year roadmap for how Norwich will deliver a dynamic, productive, and inclusive economy which provides a foundation for Norwich to be the happiest, healthiest, and most liveable city in the UK. However, the opportunity to deliver our ambitious economic plan for Norwich, the region and the nation will be lost if the MCCA does not grant Norwich a role in decision-making that reflects its contribution as the region's economic powerhouse.

Each city in the UK plays a role in driving growth, innovation, and productivity. Our global strength lies in our diversity of place, enabling each place to achieve conditions of success which will drive the nation. The UK economy thrives when its cities thrive — ensuring that Norwich has the right governance structure is not just a local issue, but a national imperative.

With a new government committed to growth and unlocking the economic potential of all parts of the country, now is the time to double down on our ambitions for Norwich's future economy and maximise our potential to be a major contributor to UK Plc.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?

- Strongly agree

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Working across the Norfolk and Suffolk geography through an MCCA has the potential to improve social outcomes through devolved powers and funding. However, this will depend on how well local and regional priorities are balanced in strategic planning, public service reform and service delivery through the proposed governance arrangements.

A Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA would have greater powers across significant policy areas which directly impact the wider determinants of health and resident outcomes including educational attainment, economic development and social wellbeing.

As highlighted in the evidence base that informed the Norwich 2040 Inclusive Economy Vision, stark disparities exist within and between our communities. Norwich has some of the most entrenched deprivation in the country and 42% of Norfolk's most deprived neighbourhoods are situated within Greater Norwich.

As outlined elsewhere in this consultation response, Norwich City Council believes that local government should be truly local and this should be a driving factor in LGR, to ensure local leaders are empowered with the necessary levers to improve social outcomes and deliver on government's devolution agenda through holistic, joined-up policy planning and service delivery.

If the MCCA and its governance arrangements are designed with a real commitment to place-based leadership and grassroots involvement, it could significantly improve social outcomes across the region. However, if regional ambitions overshadow local need, the proposed MCCA risks reinforcing persistent spatial inequalities and disenfranchising the needs of residents within a Greater Norwich on urban boundaries.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Norwich City Council agrees that unlocking large-scale economic benefits through a Devolution Deal requires a broader geographical footprint. However, devolution proposals must strike the right balance between local authorities being large enough to collaborate effectively with the MCCA on strategic priorities, whilst remaining closely connected to their communities to ensure meaningful representation and responsiveness to distinct local needs.

The impact of an MCCA on local government services will ultimately depend on its design, leadership, and local context. If LGR is carefully planned and delivers authorities of the right size and scale, it could integrate public services at the local level to improve outcomes for residents and address community needs more effectively.

We therefore urge government to ensure that LGR prioritises keeping local government genuinely local, avoiding the creation of "mega councils" that are far removed from the communities they serve. The fundamental goal of both devolution and LGR should be to deliver growth and prosperity, public service reform and improved community outcomes — not merely short-term efficiency savings.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

Working across a broader geography has the potential to enhance both local and national environmental outcomes by enabling more effective coordination of initiatives, resource pooling, and strategic, long-term environmental planning. A stronger regional voice could bolster environmental advocacy to reflect the unique environmental identity of Norfolk and Suffolk while integrating sustainability across housing, economic development, and transportation strategies.

The combined geography also holds a pivotal role in advancing the UK's net-zero ambitions and exporting world-leading skills, capabilities, and technologies. With strengths spanning offshore wind, North Sea hydrocarbon transition, carbon capture,

usage and storage (CCUS), hydrogen, solar energy, and nuclear newbuild, the region is well-placed to drive clean energy innovation. Norwich City Council is progressing ambitious plans to achieve net zero by 2045, cutting emissions from new and existing buildings and transport through energy infrastructure decarbonisation, while pioneering nature recovery initiatives across our urban landscape.

These assets present significant opportunities for local growth, economic and social regeneration, and improved community outcomes — aligning with national objectives to "identify and support clean energy industrial sectors with the greatest growth potential" and to "consider where sectors and relevant capabilities are located to identify clusters that can drive growth."

However, the success of a broader approach hinges on ensuring that hyper-local environmental needs are not overlooked. Norfolk and Suffolk face diverse environmental challenges - from coastal erosion and flood resilience to rural biodiversity and agricultural sustainability, often requiring place-based, locally tailored solutions.

Striking the right balance will depend on achieving an appropriately sized and scaled local government through LGR, ensuring principal authorities remain closely connected to the communities they serve while being equipped to contribute to regional strategies.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Please explain your answer.

A Norfolk and Suffolk MCCA has significant potential to support the interests and needs of local communities through unified and strategic regional advocacy.

Working across the broader geography of Norfolk and Suffolk will enable the region to amplify its regional voice, directing resources and political influence towards shared priorities and challenges. This collaborative approach could foster more coordinated solutions to reflect regional disparities in skills, infrastructure and

economic opportunities, benefiting communities through more cohesive, joined-up policymaking.

However, the extent to which community identities and local needs are truly reflected will depend on how effectively those identities and interests are embedded in long-term planning and the decision-making infrastructure as set out in the proposed governance arrangements (see question 2). As such, devolution must also provide a strong platform for local voices with distinct interests to be heard and represented within any Strategic Authority.

Achieving the right size and structure of local government through LGR will be essential to ensuring that principal authorities are not only fit for purpose but are truly designed to deliver in the best interests of Norfolk and Suffolk's distinct rural, urban and coastal communities.

About You

1. Please tell us how you found out about this consultation.

(select one)

- Social media
- Email
- GOV.UK website
- Local council website
- Poster/ leaflet
- Word of mouth
- News outlet (newspaper / TV / online)
- Other

2. What best describes your response?

(Select one)

- I am a member of the public, giving my views as an individual
- I am responding on behalf of, or as a representative of, a business or organisation

For those responding as a member of the public giving views as an individual

3. What is the first part of the postcode where you live? For example, if your postcode is AB1 2CD, you would write AB1 **N/A**

We ask this so that we can identify what Local Authority you live in and understand a bit more about the area where you live. We do not use this information to identify you.

4 What best describes your gender? **N/A**

(Select one)

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe: (open text box)

5. What is your age group? N/A

(Select one)

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+
- Prefer not to say

6. What is your ethnic group? N/A

(Select one)

- White
- Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups
- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

7. Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person or to have a long-term, limiting condition? N/A

Please tick one box only

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

8. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? N/A

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Gay/Lesbian

- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say
- Other – Please write below

Routing for business/organisation

- What best describes your organisation?
- Business
- County Council
- Unitary council
- **District Council**
- Town Council
- Parish Council
- Health Body
- Voluntary and community sector or charity
- Academic
- Elected representative
- Prefer not to say
- Other (Please Specify)

10. What is the first part of the postcode where your business or organisation is based? For example, if your postcode is AB1 2CD, you would write AB1.

We ask this so that we can identify what Local Authority your business/organisation is based in and understand a bit more about the area where it is located. We do not use this information to identify your organisation.

NR2

Establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority across Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council

The following information is set out on [government website](#) for the Norfolk and Suffolk devolution consultation and has been appended for ease of access.

Proposed institution, governance and decision making arrangements

Name and geographic area

It is proposed that a Mayoral Combined County Authority is established over the local council areas of Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council. The government's proposal is that the Combined County Authority would be formally known as the Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority.

Membership

Constituent councils

The councils of Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council would be the constituent councils of the proposed Combined County Authority. Each council would appoint two representatives to be constituent members. This means that there would be four constituent council members in total. Constituent councils would each be able to appoint the same number of substitute members as they appoint constituent members to act in the absence of their constituent members.

The Mayor

The Combined County Authority would have a Mayor, directly elected by local government electors (which are those eligible to vote in local council elections who are on the electoral register) across the two constituent council areas. The first mayoral election would take place on 7 May 2026. Mayors are typically elected on 4-year terms.

The Mayor would be a constituent member of the Combined County Authority, and exercise the mayoral functions outlined in the Devolution Framework on behalf of the Combined County Authority.

The Mayor would be required to appoint a deputy Mayor from among the constituent members to act in their absence or if the office of the Mayor is vacant.

The Mayor would be permitted to appoint a maximum of one political advisor.

Non-constituent and associate members

Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority's constituent members would be able to appoint a maximum of 4 non-constituent and associate members to support the delivery of their work programme. Non-constituent members are representatives of an organisation; for example, a district council, local NHS trust, the Police and Crime Commissioner, or a local registered provider. Associate members are named

individuals who can provide particular experience or expertise – for example, on active travel, or local businesses.

Role of district councils

Much of England has two tiers of local government – upper-tier county councils and lower-tier district councils – with responsibility for local services split between the two.

While all the councils in an area are constituent members of a Combined Authority, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced Combined County Authorities consisting of upper tier local councils only.

District councils cannot be full constituent members of a Combined County Authority but can participate as non-constituent members and serve on committees (see section 2.5 on non-constituent members' role in decision making).

Combined County Authority powers, functions and funding

The Combined County Authority and its Mayor would have some functions conferred onto them as part of the secondary legislation establishing the Combined County Authority as an institution. These functions would enable them to begin work on delivering local priorities from day one and are expected to include economic development and transport.

The [English Devolution White Paper](#) sets out the government's ambitions for devolution. This includes the powers, functions and funding available to Combined County Authorities – a summary table is included at Annex A.

The collection of powers, functions and funding is known as the Devolution Framework. The powers, functions and funding of a Combined County Authority vary depending on its governance and maturity. The government's intention would be for the Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority to have the powers, functions and funding set out at the mayoral level of the framework. These functions would give the Combined County Authority and the Mayor greater local control over areas such as transport, adult education and skills, and housing to enable improvements in local connectivity, educational outcomes, economic development, driving economic growth and improved social wellbeing.

The government intends to implement the Devolution Framework via the English Devolution Bill; the functions within it would then automatically be conferred onto any existing Combined County Authority if the Bill receives Royal Assent, and the provisions come into force.

Decision making at the Combined County Authority

The Combined County Authority's constituent members (the Mayor and four constituent council members) would be the decision makers within the Combined County Authority. Constituent members would automatically have voting rights. Non-constituent members can be given voting rights at the discretion of the Combined County Authority; associate members would not be able to be given voting rights.

All members would have a single vote. The default voting arrangement for Combined County Authority decisions to be approved would be a simple majority in favour, including the Mayor (for example, 3 out of 5).

No decisions can be made at a Combined County Authority meeting unless the Mayor (or deputy Mayor) and at least three constituent council members are present.

Oversight

To ensure effective scrutiny of decision making and audit of how resources are used, the Combined County Authority would have at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and one Audit Committee, in line with the requirements of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Further improvements to accountability and oversight are in development and are included in Section 5 of the English Devolution White Paper ahead of legislation being laid.

Remuneration

Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority would approve a scheme for the allowances for constituent members, following consideration of a report from an Independent Remuneration Panel. The Mayor can be paid an allowance as agreed by the constituent council members, also following consideration of a report from an Independent Remuneration Panel.

Local government reorganisation and its impacts

Councils in your area have been invited to develop proposals for new unitary local government. This would replace the existing two tier system, where services are split between a county and district council, and bring these services together in unitary local government, creating opportunities for service transformation which can support improvements in delivery. The aim is to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers and enable more funding to be spent on local public services.

This process (known as “local government reorganisation”) is a separate process to the one in this consultation. On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution invited all councils in your area to develop unitary proposals. All councils in your area have been invited to undertake wide engagement before submitting robust and evidenced unitary proposals to government by 26 September. The established assessment and decision making process will then be followed to determine which, if any, of the proposals submitted are to be implemented.

Further information is being made available at [Local government reorganisation: Policy and programme updates - GOV.UK](#)

This local government reorganisation process does not affect the potential establishment of this Combined County Authority or the Mayoral election in May 2026. In due course, if a proposal is implemented, any new unitary councils will become the constituent members of the Combined County Authority and, legally, it

will become a Combined Authority. This change does not affect the functions/powers or funding available to the area. The governance and decision making arrangements within the Combined Authority will then be updated to reflect any changes needed.

Legislation has also been made to postpone local council elections from May 2025 to May 2026 in: Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council; Essex County Council and Thurrock Council; Hampshire County Council and the Isle of Wight Council; East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council. This will allow these councils to deliver both devolution and local government reorganisation to the most ambitious timeline, working toward the first election for the Mayors of the Combined County Authorities in May 2026.



Committee name: Scrutiny

Committee date: 20/03/2025

Report title: Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-2025

Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, Cabinet member for an open and modern council

Report from: Executive director of resources

Wards: All wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To assist scrutiny committee members to review the scrutiny committee work programme 2024-25.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that that the Scrutiny Committee reviews its work programme.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- A prosperous Norwich.
- A fairer Norwich.
- A climate responsive Norwich.
- A future-proof Norwich.
- An open and modern council.

This report meets the “an open and modern council” corporate priority

Report details

Developing a work programme for the scrutiny committee

1. The scrutiny committee had an informal session led by the executive director of resources outlining the principles of good scrutiny and setting a work programme.
2. At its meeting on 19 September 2024 the Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme for 2024-25.
3. At the 10 October 2024 meeting the committee agreed the scope for the review of HR processes and agreed to form a Task and Finish Group on “Making Norwich a truly accessible city”.
4. Due to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation the Political Group Leaders agreed that the Scrutiny Committee would consider the Council’s response to the Government’s Consultation on Devolution in Norfolk and Suffolk at the meeting on 20 March 2025.
5. An additional meeting will therefore be held on 24 April 2025 to consider the items originally scheduled for 20 March 2025.
6. These items are:
 - a. Parks and Green Spaces Strategy
 - b. The report from the Making Norwich a Truly Accessible City Task and Finish Group
 - c. An update on the Communicating with the Council item
7. The review of HR Processes is being delayed as there is currently a review being undertaken. In its place it is suggested that the meeting would consider the Good Employment Charter and the HR Processes with the agreed key lines of enquiry could be scheduled for the next Civic Year.

Recurring items

8. There are certain items that are considered by the scrutiny on a regular basis. These are the scrutiny committee work programme (each meeting of the scrutiny committee), Equality Information Report (December), and pre-scrutiny of the proposed budget (January).
9. Updates are also received from the council’s representatives on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC).

Consultation

10. Scrutiny committee members took part in an informal session and the work programme will be a standing item at each meeting of the scrutiny committee.

Implications

Financial and resources

11. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2024-29 and budget.

12. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources.

Legal

13. There are no specific legal implications of this report.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	None
Health, social and economic impact	None
Crime and disorder	None
Children and adults safeguarding	None
Environmental impact	

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
None		

Other options considered

14. There have been no other options considered for this report.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

15. This report will allow scrutiny to review the work programme for scrutiny for 2024-25.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A: Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

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Norwich City Council

Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-25

Topic	Purpose	Cabinet Member	Lead Officer
20 March 2025			
The Council's response to the Government consultation on Devolution in Norfolk and Suffolk	To consider the Council's response to the Government consultation on Devolution in Norfolk and Suffolk	Cllr Stonard – Leader of the Council	Chief Executive
Updates from the Norfolk Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.	To receive updates from the Council's representatives on this body.	n/a	Head of Legal and Governance
Work Programme	To review and update the committee's work programme	n/a	Head of Legal and Governance
24 April 2025			
Parks and Open Spaces Strategy	To review the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy	Cllr Hampton – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Climate Responsive Norwich	Executive Director of Communities and Housing
Good Employment Charter	To consider the Good Employment Charter	Cllr Kendrick – Cabinet Member for An Open and Modern Council	Executive Director of Resources
Report from the Making Norwich a truly accessible city Task and Finish Group	To receive the report from the Making Norwich a truly accessible city Task and Finish Group	Cllr Giles – Cabinet Member for A Fairer Norwich	Executive Director of Communities and Housing
Update on Communicating with the Council	To consider the update on Communicating with the Council	Cllr Stonard – Leader of the Council	Executive Director of Communities and Housing Executive Director of Resources
Work Programme	To review and update the committee's work programme	n/a	Head of Legal and Governance

Items to be scheduled / carried forward:

HR Processes

Debate not Hate

NCSL Business Plan