

Subject: Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework v.2 – Adoption

Report to: Policy & Resources Committee 23 July 2019

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SUBJECT MATTER

Endorsement of the completed joint Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (version 2), and continuation of the established arrangements for joint working between the Norfolk planning authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Policy & Resources Committee:

- 1) Endorse the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework on behalf of GYBC; and**
- 2) Agrees the continuation of the joint working arrangements that were established to prepare the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework, in order to continue to meet the evolving requirements of the planning ‘duty to cooperate’.**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Borough Council is subject to a statutory ‘duty to cooperate’ with other planning authorities (and other specified organisations) in respect of planning matters that affect more than one planning authority area. The majority of such issues for GYBC relate to the other Norfolk authorities’ areas (though there are also important issues in relation to Waveney/East Suffolk and further afield).
- 1.2 In order to address these issues, the nine Norfolk planning authorities (Districts, County and Broads Authority) have worked together for two years to produce a non-statutory ‘Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework’ (NSPF). This provides an agreed broad framework, in a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG), to support individual authorities’ local plans. The Policy & Resources Committee agreed the first version of this document in February 2018. Following legislative changes and the completion of supporting work, a second version has been produced updating the NSPF. This document has now been agreed by the Joint Member Forum, and is being presented to each of the participating authorities for formal endorsement.
- 1.3 The longstanding good working relationships between the Norfolk authorities on planning matters were extended and formalised in 2015 to undertake preparation of the Framework. This included establishment of (what is now known as) the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum to oversee the work, a strengthened

role for the Norfolk Strategic Planning (officer) Group, and a financial contribution from each authority to jointly fund a Project Manager, Project Assistant and various jointly commissioned research.

- 1.4 These arrangements have worked well and continue to develop. The joint commissioning of various pieces of research – such as a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for all the county apart from Breckland and the Caravans and Houseboats Need Assessment for most of the county – is believed to have saved each authority five-figure sums compared to the cost of commissioning work individually.
- 1.5 The Joint Member Forum now recommends that these arrangements are continued for a further two years (in the first instance), in order to carry forward the matters identified in the Framework and meet the evolving demands of national policy and guidance in regard to the Duty to Co-operate. This would involve a contribution of £10,000 per annum for GYBC, and continuing input by Strategic Planning officers to the work of the group.

2 THE DUTY TO CO-OPERATE

- 2.1 The Duty to Co-operate was introduced by the 2011 Localism Act and requires direct co-ordination between local planning authorities to resolve strategic ‘cross-boundary’ issues. Local planning authorities are now tested at local plan examinations as to whether they have cooperated with neighbouring authorities (and other relevant bodies) in practice, and whether the results of this provide for the effective planning of the area. This can be challenging, and numerous local planning authorities across England have found themselves in very difficult circumstances, both reputationally and practically, as a result of having their local plans rejected on either of these grounds.
- 2.2 The importance of the Duty to Co-operate is that it must be discharged in an ongoing manner from the start of the plan-making process up until the submission of the Local Plan for examination. More recently, the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) requires that one of more Statements of Common Ground must be prepared to document the latest progress in addressing strategic cross-boundary issues.

3 THE NORFOLK STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWROK

- 3.1 The [Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework document](#), and the joint work involved, addresses the current requirements, and to some extent anticipates the additional future requirements. The Framework provides a jointly agreed identification of the key strategic ‘cross-boundary’ issues, and the way that they will be approached by the individual authorities. This is extremely valuable, for GYBC and the other Norfolk authorities, in demonstrating at Local Plan examinations that the two aspects of the formal Duty to Co-operate have been met, and in providing evidence to justify particular substantive proposals.

- 3.2 The Framework has been developed through a 'bottom-up' approach, with the detailed engagement of all the authorities. As a result, the Framework supports and develops the current understandings and intentions across the Norfolk authorities. In the first version of the framework these were crystallised in a set of 23 formal agreements within the Framework (25 agreements are now proposed), none of which represented a radical departure from existing expectations.
- 3.3 These, and the rest of the document, are judged consistent with and supportive of GYBC's strategic ambitions, explicitly acknowledging, for example, Beacon Park and South Denes on the business front; and the dualling of the Acle Straight on the infrastructure front. Its approach to the scale and distribution of housing recognises GYBC's difficulty in meeting its housing target, and the long agreed treatment of the Broads component of that need. There is a particular focus on housing delivery, and the range of joint work informing and flowing from the Framework will be helpful to GYBC in addressing its own particular challenges in that regard.
- 3.4 The preparation of the Framework has largely been carried out by officers from the participating authorities (principally heads of planning policy), coordinated and supported by a jointly funded part-time Project Manager and Project Assistant. Additional specialist input has been obtained from, for example, economic development officers, New Anglia LEP, Environment Agency, development industry involvement, and the commissioning of consultants.
- 3.5 There is [a joint public website](#) (hosted by the County Council), which was used for the consultation, and where the Framework and various supporting documents can be seen, along with papers for the Joint Member Forum meetings (which are open to the public).
- 3.6 The preparation of the Framework was overseen by the Joint Member Forum (properly, the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum). This Group has member representation from each of the nine participating authorities, and is currently chaired by Councillor John Fuller, Leader of South Norfolk Council. The GYBC Member representative is currently Councillor Graham Plant. The Joint Member Forum has now agreed the Framework, and asks each of the participating authorities to formally endorse it.
- 3.7 The main updates and changes to the revised version of the NSPF (from that of the first version) are relatively minor, reflecting existing joint working arrangements, but can be summarised as follows:
- 25 agreements, the additional 2 being coordination on minerals and waste matters and an agreement to maintain the framework in place and reviewing at least every two years
 - Updated 'Local Housing Need' figures across the authorities in line with the Government's standard methodology
 - Reported joint working beyond the county boundary (with Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire)

- Updated the roll out of 5G telecommunications infrastructure and included shared objectives

4 CONTINUATION OF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 The arrangement outlined above has proved very satisfactory, and during the course of the three years in operation has developed in strength and effectiveness, as well as saving individual authorities tens of thousands of pounds through joint commissioning of studies.
- 4.2 There is an immediate need to continue to develop some of the work instigated in preparing the Framework (e.g. that on housing delivery), and to carry forward some of the agreements (e.g. a Norfolk Green Infrastructure Strategy). The Framework itself is not an end point, and it will need to be monitored, updated and adapted going forward to address emerging Government 'duty to cooperate' requirements and developing 'cross-boundary' issues.
- 4.3 The existing arrangements provide an effective and economic way of achieving this, and the Joint Member Forum has agreed to recommend to the participating authorities that this is carried forward with the SoCG (the framework) to be reviewed and updated at least every two years.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework is an innovative and helpful means by which the Norfolk planning authorities undertake and demonstrate their obligations under the 'Duty to Cooperate'. This is already very helpful to the Borough Council in a variety of ways, and its contents are consistent with the Council's current plans and aspirations.
- 5.2 The arrangements established and formalised for preparation of the Framework have been found effective and economic. It is considered to be in the Borough Council's interests to continue these for a further two years to complete work in hand and anticipated, and allowing a review within a reasonable period.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Continuation of this work would involve a commitment of continuing officer and member involvement, and £10,000 per annum from each district (including GYBC). (The Broads Authority would contribute £5,000 and the County Council provides administrative support and funds the East of England Forecasting Model which informs the joint work.) The GYBC £10,000 contribution, and officer time input, would be met from within the existing Strategic Planning budget.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Policy & Resources Committee:

- 1) Endorses the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework on behalf of GYBC;**

and

- 2) Agrees the continuation of the joint working arrangements that were established to prepare the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework, in order to continue to meet the evolving requirements of the planning 'duty to cooperate'.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

8 LINK

- Draft track-changes version 2 framework: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/partnerships/strategic-member-forum/norfolk-strategic-planning-framework-draft-july-2019.pdf>
- Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework Member Forum (includes meeting agenda and minutes, etc.) <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/partnerships/norfolk-strategic-planning-member-forum>
- [Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Paper, February 2018](#)

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	N/A
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	N/A
Existing Council Policies:	The NSF will help delivery of the Local Plan Part 1 (Core Strategy), and provide an important part of the evidence to support the Local Plan Part 2 (Development Management, Policies and Site Allocations and Revised Housing Target) at Examination. The associated work on housing delivery will be helpful for the emerging Housing Strategy and Action Plan.
Financial Implications:	See section 6 of report.
Legal Implications (including human rights):	N/A
Risk Implications:	If the recommendations are not agreed, there is a risk that GYBC will struggle to meet its obligations under the planning 'duty to cooperate', and fail to get

	its Local Plan Part 2 through examination.
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	N/A
Crime & Disorder:	N/A
Every Child Matters:	N/A