

Subject: **REGENERATING SEASIDE TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES – COUNCIL
WRITTEN RESPONSE TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE**

Report to: Economic Development Committee – 8 October 2018

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SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS

This report provides a background and overview to the response for the House of Lords Select Committee as coordinated by officers in the Council, which is included as an appendix.

Members are asked to:

1. Review the response (appended) and provide comment on its contents
2. Endorse the dissemination of the response to the House of Lords Committee by the deadline of 9 October 2018

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities was appointed by the House on 17 May 2018. The remit of the Committee is “*to consider the regeneration of seaside towns and communities*”.
- 1.2 The Committee will explore the following key issues in detail; background and understanding, housing and demographics, transport and connectivity, the visitor economy, social and economic regeneration, education, health and wellbeing, delivery structures, and finally people and place.
- 1.3 **The deadline for submissions is 1pm on Tuesday 9 October 2018.**

2. THE RESPONSE

- 2.1 The detail within the appendix provides a strong case for Great Yarmouth, and presents a sound picture of the economy of the Borough as well as the positive impacts of public funding.
- 2.2 It does however; also provide a stark reminder of why public funding is so important, particularly how the lack of it has negatively affected the physical environment. It also emphasises the importance of partnership working; especially when considering the

impact of public realm on arrival to the Town, and the responsibility other agencies play in keeping the Town looking vibrant and attractive for those who live and work here, as well as for visitors.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications for the Council arising from the report or the response, but it is important to recognise that the results may be used to form a view of what support or public funding may be released from the Government at a future point in time.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no risk implications arising from this report, aside from the lost opportunity of influencing the House of Lords Select Committee, should the Council choose not to submit a response.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Officers have brought together a thorough evidence base, mapping the results of interventions by the Borough Council and its partners. The suggested response in the appendix is the result of this work.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Review the response (appended) and provide comment on its contents
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Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	N/A
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	N/A
Existing Council Policies:	Embedded within the appendix

Financial Implications:	Addressed above
Legal Implications (including human rights):	N/A
Risk Implications:	Addressed above
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	N/A
Crime & Disorder:	N/A
Every Child Matters:	N/A



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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27 September 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

PUBLIC CALL FOR WRITTEN EVIDENCE PUBLISHED BY THE HOUSE OF LORDS SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGENERATING SEASIDE TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES

The following is presented by Great Yarmouth Borough Council in response to the public call for written evidence published by the Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities. The structure/numbering corresponds to the Call for Evidence.

Executive summary

Great Yarmouth shares a number of well-documented challenges with other relatively remote seaside towns – connectivity/isolation, the quality of housing stock, population transience and demographics, flood risk, heritage/preservation imperatives and the availability/accessibility of funding. A number of complex, interrelated factors, such as evolving tourism trends over a number of years, have left a persistent legacy of deprivation, depressed wages, land values and social mobility and poor education/health outcomes.

Physical, social and economic regeneration to date has been somewhat fragmented, reflecting the evolving funding landscape but integrated, targeted interventions delivered in partnership with stakeholders have made – and are making – a very significant difference to the lives, opportunities and prospects of residents, as Great Yarmouth seeks to de-seasonalise, rebalance and diversify its economy and consolidate its position as an Enterprise Town at the very forefront of the North Sea offshore industry.

This response characterises and quantifies the various challenges in some detail, evaluates the impact of measures taken to address them and makes a number broad proposals, in terms of the fiscal/financial measures and freedoms available to seaside towns.

Ongoing underfunding has directly contributed to the challenges outlined herein, conflicting with ambitions to realise a wider local 'offer' that can attract and retain visitors, tourists and the skilled workers required to drive the economy. This applies both to direct funding, reliefs and other financial instruments available to the Authority and also to the investment priorities of other agencies – e.g. transport infrastructure – and the private sector.

Without a commitment to progressively increase support to seaside towns – alongside the granting of specific mitigating freedoms and flexibilities – there is likely to be a sustained downward spiral, particularly in inner urban neighbourhoods as seaside towns decline further in relation their peers.

Background and understanding

- 1. What are the challenges facing seaside towns and communities? Which of those challenges are common to many seaside towns, and to what extent (and why) have such challenges persisted over a number of years?**
 - 1.1 With a population of 98,700 residents, projected to increase to 105,400 by 2021, Great Yarmouth – situated between the North Sea and the Norfolk Broads – shares a number of well-documented challenges with other relatively remote seaside towns; connectivity, educational outcomes/aspirations, social mobility and health.
 - 1.2 Evolving tourism trends over a number of years have left a persistent legacy of semi-redundant accommodation and housing stock and low housing/land values. The reliance of the local economy upon tourism presents a number of challenges, including a transient population and seasonal employment opportunities attracting depressed wages. Severe deprivation is concentrated in the urban wards where over half of working-age residents live.
 - 1.3 In 2014, the Borough used the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) *Nearest Neighbour Model* to undertake a comparative analysis and calculation of 'distance' between Great Yarmouth and other local authorities. Whilst the comparison is somewhat broad-brush, it is derived from data covering 41 different metrics across a wide range of socioeconomic indicators. On that basis, of Great Yarmouth's fifteen 'nearest' neighbours, twelve were other coastal/seaside towns and communities: Waveney; Scarborough; Shepway; North Devon; Allerdale; Barrow-in-Furness; Dover; Thanet; Weymouth & Portland; Chesterfield; Sedgemoor; Hastings; Mansfield; Fenland; Lancaster. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the Borough shares, in common, a number of underlying challenges with other seaside towns.
 - 1.4 There are, however, opportunities. The Borough has been an operations and maintenance base for gas extraction for more than half a century and, with its established deep-water port, is well-placed to establish itself as a centre of excellence for offshore decommissioning, provided the wider local 'offer' can attract and retain highly-skilled workers.
- 2. Has sufficient research been conducted to provide robust analysis of the economic and social health and vitality of seaside towns? What are the main conclusions to be drawn from such data and research – and where are the principal gaps in knowledge and understanding?**
 - 2.1 Reports are published periodically (e.g. *Turning the Tide* from the Centre of Social Justice in 2013, which included Great Yarmouth) and the media occasionally showcases the plight of seaside towns (e.g. The Financial Times' awarding-winning report on Blackpool in 2017). The *English Indices of Multiple Deprivation* published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) are particularly useful in quantifying and characterising the various component factors of local deprivation.
 - 2.2 There remains, however, a gap in our collective understanding of the mechanisms by which disadvantage – expressed in terms of economic and social health – are conferred upon the geographic margins of the UK – and 'ends of the line', such as seaside towns.
 - 2.3 Recent commentary proposed that current fiscal policy depressed the regions relative to London and that the UK is, on a regional basis, the most heterogeneous country in the EU; seaside towns are often to be found at the extreme end of that spectrum, compounded by social factors associated with other urban centres.
 - 2.4 Additional effort is needed to describe the mechanisms/factors that give rise to this phenomenon by looking at the geospatial effects of the fiscal regime, credit distribution by the banking sector and fiscal transfers (i.e. government spending). These factors and the mitigating measures applied should be benchmarked against states exhibiting less regional imbalance.
 - 2.5 At a local authority level, there needs to be sufficient capacity/resource to generate and maintain robust evidence bases – data, analyses and exposition – in order to support the regeneration agenda and participate meaningfully in shaping local and regional priorities.

Housing and demographics

3. **To what extent are seaside towns affected by issues arising from the nature of their housing stock, including Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and former tourist accommodation that has been converted for other uses? How might any such issues be addressed – and are any changes to Government policy required?**
- 3.1 Great Yarmouth aspires to an attractive mix of housing and a healthy private rented landscape fit for purpose for all to meet the Borough's existing and future needs. Land value is a persistent barrier to realising this ambition and the Borough struggles to create a context in which investors have confidence to build or develop existing housing projects to support growth regeneration. The Council will examine options to make use of the new £630m *Small Sites Fund* to be administered by Homes England to de-risk the development of residential sites.
- 3.2 There are ongoing issues around the private rented sector and multi-agency intervention is required to tackle rogue landlords, bring empty homes back into use and improve amenity. Local housing strategy must also balance the need to provide new houses of a better quality to ensure that a) the higher-earning employees of local companies feel able to live well and develop roots in our Town and b) provide social and affordable housing to meet the needs of the community.
- 3.3 As holiday tastes have changed, owners of large properties such as guesthouses have had little financial alternative to opening their rooms up to residents who need living accommodation, leading to a dramatic growth in the number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), bedsits, and small flats (in pursuit of the maximum number of rental units) within several borough wards.
- 3.4 A significant number of these HMOs are run by irresponsible landlords exploiting the plight of their tenants, some of whom are amongst the most vulnerable in society. As more hotel and guesthouse businesses close and owner-occupiers move out, more private landlords move in. The private rented sector has become the dominant tenure in some locations, with landlords owning large portfolios.
- 3.5 Piecemeal interventions by a number of agencies over the years have secured improvements to some of the housing on a generally reactive basis and it is recognised that attempts at wider area schemes such as the Secondary Holiday Area Regeneration Project (SHARP) – a heritage 'enveloping' grant scheme funded by the former East of England Regional Assembly in 2006 for a two year period – have delivered localised improvements to the housing stock.
- 3.6 Coupled with a rise in the number of complaints to public agencies about low-level crime and anti-social behaviour, some locations have become characterised by low housing demand where only a significant investment in resources on an area-wide basis can realise tangible improvements for residents.
- 3.7 As a result, the accommodation offer has largely been aimed at the lower end of the market. With many vulnerable households migrating inwards, the socio-economic shift has led to the area having some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, represented by high levels of worklessness, benefit dependency, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor educational achievement (Great Yarmouth has the worst post-16 educational attainment in the Country) and health inequalities.
- 3.8 According to the *English Indices of Multiple Deprivation*, the Nelson, Central and Northgate wards are amongst the most 10% deprived wards in the Country with parts of the Nelson ward ranking 20th out of 32,844 neighbourhoods in England for multiple deprivations. Overall, 20 out of 61 of the Borough's 'Local Lower Surface Output Areas' (LSOAs) are in the bottom 20% nationally, 16 of these in the bottom 10%, and 5 in the bottom 1%.
- 3.9 Preliminary investigations based upon increased political and police interest in HMOs led to an investigation into associated anti-social behaviour (ASB), although there was no definitive correlation between Mandatory Licensed HMOs and complaints received by the Council or Police. However, analysis of the data demonstrated that the majority of Police ASB incidents, computer-aided dispatches (CADs), ASB complaints to the Police and Council and housing complaints to Environmental Health were centred on the Nelson, Central and Northgate wards (typically more than the rest of the Borough combined).
- 3.10 This led to concerted efforts to address the challenge through other forms of property licensing and Selective Licensing was found to be the most effective means of doing so. Analysis of Police and Council data demonstrated that conditions within the wards satisfied

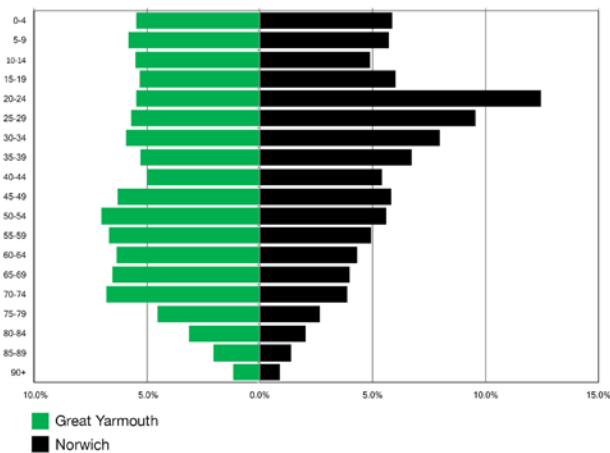
five of the six tests for Selective Licensing in addition to having the: highest density housing in Borough; greatest regulatory involvement; largest proportion of rented properties; lowest housing standards; very poor health; and very significant deprivation.

- 3.11 On the strength of evidence characterising the multifarious challenge facing the community, the National Landlords Association publicly supported the Council's Selective Licensing Designation Report (upon which it consulted between June and August 2018). Whilst individual private landlords cannot be held responsible for the wider social and economic changes and challenges, some are compounding deprivation and poor health outcomes by providing poorly-managed and unsafe homes. Such landlords are able to undercut their more-responsible competitors. Selective Licensing should make Great Yarmouth a fairer place for landlords to do business, while providing decent homes for residents.

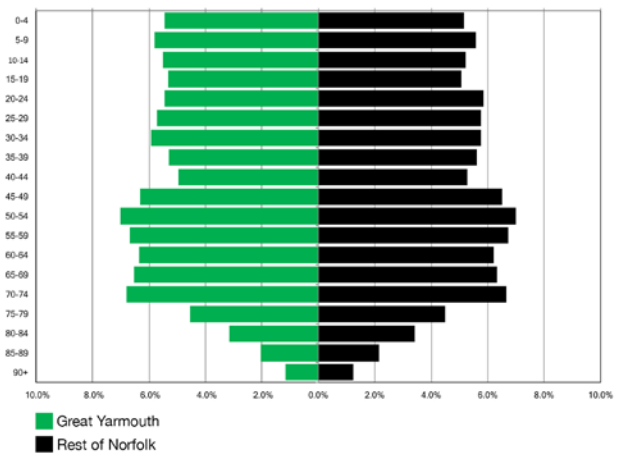
4. Do population transience, and demographic changes more widely, present any particular issues for seaside towns and communities? What is the nature and scale of such issues, and how can local organisations and communities be assisted in seeking to address them?

- 4.1 There is anecdotal evidence that transient and newly-integrated populations within the Borough may strain social cohesion and contribute to depressed educational attainment levels. At a practical level it's been observed that *Big Society* indicators, such as volunteering rates and active engagement in community initiatives appear to be relatively low too.
- 4.2 The Nelson, Central and Northgate wards exhibit elevated levels of single-occupier households, due to the inward migration of low-income households and individuals and because of the availability of relatively low-cost HMO and bedsit accommodation. There is a greater proportion of individuals who are resettling following release from prison (some landlords operate HMOs in these areas that specialise in accommodating recent ex-offenders), have mental health issues, a history of substance abuse, are effectively relocated by other local authorities – or are simply seeking a seaside lifestyle that recalls cherished holidays.
- 4.3 Other local authorities are known to cite the excellent Herring House Trust charity and hostel for the homeless and pay for individuals to travel to the Borough, even if there are no confirmed hostel places. This contributes to regular unauthorised encampments, anti-social behaviour, discarded needles and waste at the Minster Churchyard, on the beach, and in parks. The nationally-acclaimed and resident-led *Neighbourhoods That Work* programme seeks to address these issues in certain urban wards and is described in *Section 15*.
- 4.4 Populations within the Nelson, Central and Northgate wards tend to be highly transient, with most aspirational individuals families seeking to move out of the area and into better accommodation as soon as the opportunity arises. This churn affects social cohesion and pride in the area, resulting in poorly presented/maintained properties and a corresponding increase in environmental nuisance/crime such as littering and fly-tipping.
- 4.5 This is reflected in local housing demand and very depressed rents; average housing freeholds (typically £80,000 in one area) have fuelled the growth of the low-quality private rented sector (approximately 60% of all dwellings within the Selective Licensing Designation, compared to 20% for England as a whole). Selective Licensing is addressed further in *Paragraphs 3.9-3.11*.
- 4.6 There is also anecdotal evidence that the labour market and demand for public/health services have been distorted by demographics; local age distribution appears to be skewed towards older, less economically-active individuals. Whilst this is certainly the case in comparison to the major metropolitan centre of nearby Norwich, there is little quantitative evidence that Great Yarmouth deviates significantly from the situation in the rest of the County, as illustrated in the following charts, which use, as their basis, the 2017 data retrieved from the ONS.
- 4.7 It is likely – but not verified – that the perception that the Town has a predominantly older population arises because many individuals of a working age take advantage of lower local living costs and commute outside of the Borough for work.

Great Yarmouth demography / age composition compared to Norwich



Great Yarmouth demography / age composition compared to the rest of Norfolk



Transport and connectivity

5. Do problems relating to transport and connectivity (including digital connectivity) present a barrier to economic growth for seaside towns and communities? What action has been taken to address such matters, and is any further Government action required? To what extent would addressing such issues create the opportunity for future inward investment and growth?
 - 5.1 Great Yarmouth is connected to Norwich by rail and by the A47, which is part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). It is linked to Lowestoft by rail and by the A47 (formerly the A12 and also part of the SRN). The other important road is the A143 to Bury St. Edmunds, which terminates in the Town. By virtue of its location on the coast to the east of the Norfolk Broads, Great Yarmouth is relatively isolated.
 - 5.2 Despite significant traffic congestion into, out of and within the Town, it is an important employment centre and tourist destination, with over 1 million overnight visitors and about 4 million visitor trips each year. The major investment in transport infrastructure needed to support regeneration and economic growth is ongoing, with £120m being invested in a third river crossing and £9m being invested to secure congestion relief and sustainable transport improvements within the Borough. Safety is also a driver; there were 180 serious/fatal accidents on the A47 between 2011 and 2015.
 - 5.3 Aside from tourism, Great Yarmouth has been defined – historically – by its port, which services a range of diverse business interests as a potential entry point for national/international freight and base for offshore decommissioning projects in the southern North Sea basin. Further exploitation of the Port as an engine of growth, regeneration and diversification/de-seasonalisation of the economy is currently constrained by road and rail connectivity – specifically a) capacity/safety issues with the A47 and b) the need for a third river crossing to improve urban linkages between tourism, retail and port industry – affecting the movement of goods, services and workforces into, out of and within the Borough.
 - 5.4 Rail connectivity is somewhat constrained by a stretch of single track between the village of Brundall on the Norfolk Broads and the *Acle Straight*, to the immediate west of Great Yarmouth and by a physical disconnect with the Town's industrial/port areas to the east of the River Bure – limiting options for integrated freight-handling. Passenger services are, however, expected to be enhanced by planned investment in new rolling stock over the next year.
 - 5.5 In 2016, Highways England commissioned a report on key international gateways (ports and airports), their importance to England's economy and the role of the Strategic Road Network in supporting this critical infrastructure. It noted that: ports serve manufacturing sectors and are key inter-modal points for the logistics and distribution sector; ports are highly dependent on road connectivity for the inward and outward movement of freight; ports are significant employment areas; congestion, causing increased travel times and reduced journey time reliability, can increase freight costs and diminish the competitive advantage of parts of the UK, by reducing the effective catchment area of a port.
 - 5.6 The third river crossing will support the Town's role as part of the East of England Energy Zone, as a centre for offshore renewable engineering and the emerging offshore decommissioning sector. It will also enhance wider regeneration efforts, economic growth

and act as a catalyst for inward investment, connecting the strategic road network and the fast growing energy-focussed Enterprise Zone and industrial centre on the South Denes peninsula.

- 5.7 East/west connectivity is considered essential to open up the Borough to inward investment and growth. The Council has a key ongoing advocacy role, mobilising and working closely with local stakeholders/lobbies (established relationships with Highways England and Norfolk County Council, the LEP, local press and the vocal A47 Alliance campaign) – building the evidence base, supporting individual improvement measures and ensuring that the issue is reflected in the Integrated Transport Strategy for Norfolk & Suffolk, Norfolk & Suffolk Economic Strategy and Norfolk Strategic Framework.
- 5.8 A fully-dualled A47 would help to boost the economic prosperity of a large part of the east of England and make a significant contribution to the national economy, improving east/west connectivity and linking the deep water port with other regional centres. A programme of staged, incremental investment will turn 115 miles of the A47 into a genuine strategic link and the Government is committed – via its Road Investment Strategy (*RIS 1*) investment plan for 2015 to 2020 – to the investment of £300m+ for improvements along the route during the early 2020s.
- 5.9 The estimated cost of a fully-dualled A47 is £1.4bn, which would deliver 17,000 new jobs 11,000 new dwellings and increase GVA by £706m. The dualling of the main east/west road to Norwich and the region beyond – the *Acle Straight* – is identified as a specific priority in the second RIS (*RIS 2*), which spans the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- 5.10 At a national level, a funding allocation prioritisation mechanism that addresses the physical disconnect between many seaside towns and the wider regions would be very positive – for example, some relaxation of the value-for-money thresholds applied to the financial evaluation of proposals for major road projects.
- 5.11 Digital connectivity is considered in the context of digital exclusion, broadly defined as the inability to access online products or services or to use simple forms of digital technology. The issue disproportionately affects vulnerable people, low-income groups, the elderly and more marginalised communities, creating a strong correlation between digital exclusion and social exclusion.
- 5.12 At a strategic level, the *Better Broadband for Norfolk* (BBfN) scheme is a multi-million pound partnership funded through Norfolk County Council, BT, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), New Anglia LEP and five of Norfolk's district councils and is leading on upgrades to high-speed fibre optic networks across the County.
- 5.13 A digital exclusion heatmap was developed by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and drew upon research from the 2017 Ipsos MORI *Get Digital Skills Survey*. It used four digital metrics (infrastructure, an ONS internet access indicator and individual skill/use data), three social metrics from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (health, employment/skills and income) and age distribution data to calculate the overall likelihood of exclusion.
- 5.14 The study found that the likelihood of overall digital exclusion in Great Yarmouth was *high*: whilst broadband speeds were adequate, the availability of 4G mobile data remained patchy; 11.4% of adults had not been online within the last 3 months; 76% of adults had all five of the *Basic Digital Skills* set out in the Tech Partnership's framework (managing information, communicating, transacting, problem solving and creating); 42% of adults in Great Yarmouth had used all of those skills in the preceding three months. The *high* digital exclusion rating was compounded by the inclusion of deprivation data in the assessment.
- 5.15 The *UK Consumer Digital Index 2018* published by Lloyds Banking Group benchmarked people's digital and financial capabilities. Amongst other insights, it found a) an average difference of £13,000 between the annual income of those with the full five Basic Digital Skills and those without, and b) people with a registered disability were four times more likely to be offline and almost a third of those over the age of 60 are digitally excluded.
- 5.16 Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) is a multi-million pound partnership funded through Norfolk County Council, BT, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), New Anglia LEP, and five of Norfolk's district councils and is leading on upgrades to broadband across the County through the installation of high-speed fibre optic networks.

The role of the visitor economy

6. **How successful have initiatives that seek to promote tourism and the visitor economy in seaside towns proven to be? How important are these sectors to the economies of seaside towns? Is sufficient attention being given to the potential contribution that could be made by other sectors, beyond tourism?**
- 6.1 Great Yarmouth has been largely successful in maintaining its core tourism industry despite changes to the market since the advent of affordable air travel. As a holiday destination for generations, Great Yarmouth is now the third largest seaside resort in the UK. Tourism is worth £625.6m to the borough's economy (Destination Research, 2017) and supports 9,191 FTE jobs, equivalent to 35.5% of the workforce. Approximately one third of visitor spend is on food and drink, a quarter on shopping and a fifth on accommodation.
- 6.2 Second home ownership levels are relatively low, with nearly 90% of overnight visitors relying on paid accommodation, comprising hotels, guest houses, inns, B&Bs and holiday parks. The ability to attract and create new tourism markets is recognised as important, with an additional – year-round – emphasis on culture and heritage to capitalise on out-of-season vacationing and improve the offer to residents, in line with the overarching ambition to attract and retain skilled workers.
- 6.3 ONS data for 2017 enable the tourism sector to be characterised at a borough level. For this particular analysis, the list of enterprises included was drawn from the international definition of tourism-related industries identified on the basis of UK five-digit SIC07 codes in line with *VisitEngland* and ONS *Guidance Note Five: Measuring the Supply Side of Tourism*. In terms of enterprise counts, take away food shops and mobile food stands and public houses and bars dominate. Compared to the wider Norfolk picture, Great Yarmouth has a higher proportion of enterprises providing: gambling and betting activities; holiday centres and villages; other foodservice activities; camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks – as well as other accommodation and foodservice providers.
- 6.4 Great Yarmouth hasn't taken the purely Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) approach adopted by, for example, *Visit Norwich*. Instead, it has helped to establish the Greater Yarmouth Tourism and Business Improvement Area, which supported over 30 projects and events during its first year. This device – an evolution of the Business Improvement District (BID) model – democratises strategy/delivery and there are clear signs that this has reduced resistance to change from providers and local stakeholders. The Organisation also helps to drive an ambitious cultural package to consolidate and extend the season, which is considered absolutely intrinsic to the tourism 'offer'.
- 6.5 Traditional tourism remains a bedrock of the economy and, alongside the current stakeholder-led exercise to update its Tourism Strategy, the Town is actively exploring ways to make its 'offer' more coherent for residents, potential residents, tourists and investors, acknowledging the need to distil and communicate the cultural vision and opportunities on offer and promote what makes the place special in a crowded marketplace. Such an approach could: get Great Yarmouth's story in front of the audiences that matter; increase visitor numbers, their length of stay and per capita spend; encourage private sector collaboration and ownership to grow the local economy; attract more inward investment; attract and retain the best talent.
- 6.6 The Borough is not solely dependent upon tourism and hosts other key growth sectors, as identified in its Economic Growth Strategy. These are primarily focused on servicing the offshore industry and the Port and have been important since the Second World War, when some engineering industries were relocated out of London. The discovery and exploitation of hydrocarbons in the southern North Sea basin from the 1960s has been crucial in offsetting the decline the tourism industry from about the same period.
- 6.7 The boom in offshore wind installation/servicing now underpins growth in these sectors, although North Sea gas will remain a resource for the foreseeable future. Great Yarmouth is now a globally-recognised offshore energy sector hub, serving as the base for assembly, installation and maintenance of some of the world's largest offshore wind projects. The emergence of opportunities around offshore oil and gas infrastructure decommissioning will need to be capitalised upon and these are reflected in recent upgrades to the Port, the third river crossing, the establishment of the successful energy-focused Enterprise Zone and other proposed upgrades to transport connectivity.

Physical regeneration

7. **Are sufficient tools and resources available to local authorities, property owners and other stakeholders to allow them to promote and deliver the restoration and regeneration of the physical environment in seaside towns? Could new approaches – or the removal of any existing barriers – support further regeneration?**
- 7.1 The stakeholder-led Great Yarmouth Town Centre Regeneration Framework & Masterplan – developed in collaboration with Carter Jonas – sets out ambitions/priorities for the regeneration of the town centre over the coming decade. Depressed land values are a persistent barrier to physical regeneration and redevelopment, however, and – alongside elevated flood risks and archaeological constraints within the Town – act to deter public/private investment in new projects.
- 7.2 Successful initiatives, such as SHARP (see *Section 3*) and joint working with the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust have, however, significantly reduced the number of buildings listed on Historic England's *Heritage at Risk Register* in recent years – including the iconic St. George's Theatre on King Street. Competitive funding will need to be secured for other pressing priorities, such as the Grade II* listed Winter Gardens.
- 7.3 There is a body of analysis to support the proposition that the current business rates regime confers a structural bias against peripheral economies such as Great Yarmouth. Reform of commercial taxation, compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) and the attendant change-of-use regime would directly assist local authority regeneration efforts. Switching the focus of commercial taxation to land value would help struggling high streets and rebalance the economy, both geographically and sectorally. Key and emerging sectors, such as manufacturing and technology are likely to be the primary beneficiaries of any such change.
- 7.4 High streets and the enterprises therein would also benefit at a time when they are under sustained and well-documented pressure from both business rates overheads and the profound market changes arising from social and technological developments (e.g. the wider digital transformation agenda and the challenge of online retail). There is a core geospatial element too; business rates distort the economy by conferring disproportionate benefit on London and away from manufacturing.
- 7.5 The success of the Borough's energy-focussed Enterprise Zone demonstrates the positive impact of taxation and related incentives in driving inward investment, growth, job creation and diversification of the local economy. This is addressed further in *Section 8*. Alongside a review of the commercial tax regime, other related observations/recommendations are made as follows:
 - The total exemption of vacant listed buildings from business rates has resulted, locally, in a number of iconic listed properties remaining vacant, with few obvious incentives for landowners to restore them to suitable use. Speculative land ownership has resulted in derelict/unused sites and landlords can avoid incurring business rates on empty premises by striking deals with charities – including the occupation of parts of premises to benefit from relief on the whole – resulting in an oversupply of charity shops, rather than private, wealth-creating enterprises.
 - Property-owner BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) would focus upon freeholders, rather than tenants, helping to identify absentee landlords, incentivise them appropriately and address the resistance of commercial tenants to BIDs.
 - The power to purchase property at existing use value could be restored to local government to drive affordable regeneration activity and return betterment value to support local government finance. There is also some scope to explore and facilitate social models of ownership under the Community Right to Bid arrangements and developing shorter flexible leasing products.
 - The Town's extensive range of impressive – if somewhat faded – Victorian and Edwardian buildings – a key component of its 'offer' – tends to result in an over-reliance on resourcing for regeneration/conservation on competitive funds such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, alongside the Coastal Communities Fund. Continued government patronage of schemes such as these is critical.
 - The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas, based on the amount of extra Council Tax revenue raised for new-build homes, conversions and long-term empty homes brought back into use. The District Councils' Network recently argued that, whilst the scheme has

- been a powerful driver for housing growth, the New Homes Bonus threshold should be scrapped. Such a move might enable the ring-fencing of additional funds for regeneration.
- VAT regime reform should recognise the importance of renovation and refurbishment over new build in seaside regeneration schemes; the current system clearly favours new build and, therefore, discriminates against seaside towns in which the heritage of the built environment forms an intrinsic part of the 'offer'.

Social and economic regeneration

8. What work is being done in seaside towns to support social and economic regeneration, and to improve social mobility across the whole community? What more could or should be done by the Government, and relevant organisations, to deliver such initiatives?

- 8.1 Local wages are depressed and employment opportunities are still seasonal. Interventions to date have been somewhat fractured, reflecting the overall funding landscape. There is, for example, a Great Yarmouth Town Centre Regeneration Framework & Masterplan, a £1m Town Centre Initiative, improvements to the public realm and a shopfront grants scheme.
- 8.2 There are also a) efforts to assist individuals into self-employment, using GYBC-licensed markets as low-risk, low-outlay vehicles for local entrepreneurs to trial/refine/grow sustainable new products/services/models (the EU Interreg-backed *GoTrade* project), and b) opportunities for dialogue and partnerships to make vacant commercial space available for pop-up uses (shops, indoor markets, foodservice or galleries). These measures act synergistically in support of the Masterplan.
- 8.3 The Council acknowledges the need for physical regeneration – affordable quality housing and a desirable coastal destination/environment to attract/retain people and enterprises – and addressing local educational barriers to enhance aspirations, prosperity and social/economic inclusion by incentivising specific skills/qualifications to manage the mismatch between skills supply and demand (see *Section 10*) – in order to diversify the local economy, maximise social inclusion and the accessibility of associated opportunities.
- 8.4 Core to regeneration efforts is addressing the challenge to high street enterprises in a rapidly-changing operating environment through adaptation; building a resilient, vibrant, balanced town centre that harnesses the potential of a safe and vibrant evening economy, services/supports the surrounding community and visitor economy and provides an enhanced route to economic activity/inclusion – and social mobility – for local people.
- 8.5 Traditional high street destinations have been under sustained pressure for some time, reflecting changes in the distribution of populations, the wider economic picture and an increasing emphasis upon shopping centres and retail parks. Arguably the most significant factor is, however, the relentless rise in online sales, which has been steady since at least 2007. According to ONS data, online retail accounted for 2.8% of total sales over Christmas 2006, as opposed to nearly 20% for the same period in 2017.
- 8.6 Google reports that 72% of people buy online and existing physical stores have been attempting – with mixed success – to move into the online space. In fact, there's evidence that mature domestic retailers are often simply shifting their existing customers from physical stores to online, rather than generating additional sales.
- 8.7 New retailers aren't entering the UK market and rolling out 400 new outlets across all the major town centres anymore. They now open 20-50 larger 'showroom' stores in the major retail centres, combined with a strong internet presence that runs symbiotically, providing the consumer with both traditional and online shopping options.
- 8.8 In 2017, the Centre for Retail Research predicted that the rise of online retailing will result in a decrease in physical stores. Colliers International argue, however, that the number of empty shops is actually expected to fall by 2020, a temporary reprieve driven largely by a projected increase in population. It is also difficult to say with any certainty what the long-term effects of Brexit on retail and the high street might be.
- 8.9 The *Portas Pilots*, which reported on their impact in July 2013, showcased innovative ways of getting people back into local shops, but resources were spread very thinly. Since then, the Association of Town Centre Management and the MHCLG have published their *Digital High Street 2020* report, proposing town centre connectivity infrastructure, addressing digital skills shortages, the rollout of easy-to-use digital capabilities for town centre businesses and benchmarking tools.

- 8.10 In realising its own ambitions in relation to its high streets, the Borough must be pragmatic about the scale of the online challenge; there is no way to reverse the trend towards online. It's also worth noting that the performance of high streets is not purely a function/reflection of retail performance. Town centres are unique, complex environments which serve many roles simultaneously – particularly in Great Yarmouth, with its focus on the seasonal tourist trade.
- 8.11 The strategic focus should, therefore, be upon working alongside the Greater Yarmouth Tourism and Business Improvement Area to facilitate the adaptation to – rather than the countering of – this challenge by supporting a resilient, balanced town centre that 'looks beyond retail'; consumers are increasingly spending their money on eating out, socialising and wellbeing in successful town centres and it's important to attract and sustain a healthy mix of businesses and people to invest, trade, employ and reside therein.
- 8.12 There are some encouraging signals; the British Retail Consortium (BRC) reports that high street footfall rose by 0.9%, while footfall in shopping centres fell by 0.8% in the year to June 2017, although this is not necessarily apparent in a seasonal market like Great Yarmouth. Examples that could be explored as hooks to pull people into the town centre and generate footfall include:
- making increased use of local assets (shops, public art, heritage);
 - harnessing the potential of a safe and vibrant night-time/evening economy, tapping into estimated spend across the UK of £60 billion;
 - exploring social models of ownership for certain types of hospitality or retail enterprise and premises under the *Community Right to Bid* arrangements.
- 8.13 The Borough and the various projects can also reach out to owners and developers of properties to:
- make empty units available for pop-up uses (shops, indoor markets, foodservice or galleries), possibly free-of-charge;
 - develop shorter, flexible leasing products;
 - visually enhance vacant units with graphics/displays to improve visual amenity.
- 8.14 The Borough is seeking to reposition itself as fast-growing coastal 'Enterprise Town', attracting new business, inward investment, and fully exploiting the port and opportunities of offshore energy industry. The extension of the Borough's existing and highly-successful Enterprise Zone and the incentives therein – alongside leveraging business support provision and inward investment interventions, schemes to connect businesses to schools and support the development/retention of relevant skills locally to ensure that residents are able to access the high wages on offer within the Borough – presents a significant opportunity to rebalance the local economy – provided the local authority is given sufficient flexibility to put in place the right package of enabling incentives and reliefs.

9. What role should local businesses, SMEs and social enterprises play in seeking to deliver regeneration in seaside towns? How effective is any help currently provided to these groups by the Government, local authorities and others? Are there any barriers to growth that could be addressed by changes in policy?

- 9.1 Economic growth is addressed in the stakeholder-led Great Yarmouth Economic Strategy, which reflects the local significance of both SMEs and social enterprises. Local full time employment remains low in comparison to Norfolk and the rest of the Country, but part time employment rates are higher. Great Yarmouth hosts some of highest paid jobs in Norfolk, but residents earn less than regional and national averages; many of the people in the highest paid jobs live outside the Borough. Improving graduate and skilled-worker retention to service growth industries – along with work returners and other off-the-radar individuals – is a key priority.
- 9.2 The LEP is currently rolling out a central customer relationship management system (CRMS) to ensure that serial business interventions by different districts and other providers can be tracked and co-ordinated. Whilst this joined-up approach is welcome, there are some concerns that the districts will only have access to a subset of the underlying data and that the LEP may become the predominant interface for inter-district economic development and inward investment communication.

- 9.3 As outlined in *Section 6*, improved coherence around 'sense of place' should encourage private sector collaboration and ownership to grow the local economy and get businesses involved in promoting Great Yarmouth as a fast-growing coastal 'Enterprise Town', attracting inward investment and skilled workers to service growth opportunities and economic regeneration.
- 9.4 The Town could also stand to benefit from depressed land/property values to mirror, for example, the *East London Effect*, whereby creative industries are increasingly moving out of expensive areas to cheaper locations, such as Waltham Forest, which is seeking to establish a Creative Enterprise Zone to maintain, grow and encourage collaboration within the creative cluster already establishing itself there. This approach would need to be driven by 'immigration' from other subregional locations, alongside careful stewardship of the emerging scene/cluster within the Town – which is sustained, to some extent, by the strategic emphasis on a strong programme of cultural activity to support tourism.
- 9.5 Local enterprise activity must amplify, extend and go beyond the kinds of support provided by the Growth Hub; there is a need to both establish/deliver new projects and also ensure that the Borough is able to shape and benefit equitably from third party projects and funds – particularly in the context of the LEPs' increasing role as a conduit for public funding and economic development at both a strategic and delivery level.
- 9.6 It is essential that, if the delivery of frontline economic development falls increasingly within the LEPs' remit, local authorities must be able to inform the strategic landscape in order to avoid the centralisation of economic growth decision making at a LEP level and the potential for 'democratic deficit'. There is also an immediate opportunity to influence the formulation/focus of the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund – which will replace key EU structural funds – and ensure that its operational programmes reflect the particular needs of seaside economies.

Education, health and wellbeing

10. Is educational provision in coastal communities of a good enough standard? Do coastal communities experience any particular challenges around the provision of secondary, further and higher education and, if so, what action should be taken to promote positive change?

- 10.1 In terms of education, skills and training, Great Yarmouth ranks bottom out of 326 local authority areas. Great Yarmouth GCSE achievement is below the national and county averages, with 56.5% of its school children achieving 5 GCSEs graded A*-C in 2015 compared to 63% in England and 61.4% in Norfolk. NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) rates for 16-18 year-olds are declining, although they are the second highest in Norfolk. In 2016, 23% of residents in Great Yarmouth had an NVQ Level 4 or above. This is an increase since 2009 (10.3%) and 2015 (16.9%). It still compares unfavourably to Norfolk (31.4%), the wider East of England (34.9%) and the UK (38%).
- 10.2 Lower achievement is common to many peripheral areas, such as Cumbria, Cornwall and the Isle of Wight. It is quite possible that this correlation in performance translates into causation, but the exact mechanism is little understood. By contrast, achievement has improved considerably in London, even in the more deprived areas.
- 10.3 Underlying aspiration levels remain stubbornly low, contributing to reduced social mobility. Local wages are depressed and employment opportunities are still seasonal. Various commentators have proposed that travel constraints are a significant educational disincentive in the young. Affordable quality housing and a desirable coastal location could, however, attract and retain enterprises and skills must reflect and service the opportunity around the Norfolk and Suffolk Energy Coast – focussing on the trio of energy sectors within the Industrial Strategy; offshore wind, oil/gas, nuclear.
- 10.4 The need to address local educational barriers and enhance aspirations, prosperity and social/economic inclusion by incentivising specific skills/qualifications to manage the mismatch between skills supply and demand – the 'predict and provide' model – is generally acknowledged. The Norfolk & Suffolk Economic Strategy highlights the need for collaboration between businesses and schools to drive skills, employment and median wage and there is an opportunity to ensure that this is enshrined in the LEP's emerging Energy Sector Skills Plan.

- 10.5 It is recognised that for borough residents to take job opportunities arising from the energy sector, having the right skill set is essential. Of particular importance are the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects required to align education with employer needs (particularly in regard to the offshore/maritime sectors). Provision in the Borough reflects this, with a new Offshore Energy Skills Centre forming part of the proposed Institute of Technology, the East Norfolk Sixth Form, the University Campus Suffolk (UCS)-linked East Coast College and – slightly further afield – the University of East Anglia's energy engineering course.
- 10.6 There are a number of complementary opportunities that – if properly resourced – could improve the situation: utilising digital connectivity to maximise access to education; community outreach to engage the economically-inactive and returners; connecting local business leaders with local schools and colleges; direct enterprise dialogue and the provision of free/subsidised transport to attend courses/apprenticeships and utilising apprenticeships levy within key sector supply chains. These could enhance individuals' access to education, training and the labour market; raise aspirations with individuals able to meet their full potential; boost social mobility and living standards; create the conditions for sustained growth and address urban/rural convergence.
- 10.7 It is understood that schools in *special measures* do not let their students attend events pertaining to aspiration and are 100% curriculum-focussed. As a consequence, local skills events held in our Borough (such as those hosted by *Skills for Energy*, which seek to interest local students in the high-GVA energy jobs on their doorstep) can be inaccessible to whole cohorts of pupils.

11. Is there evidence to suggest that certain health conditions are more prevalent in seaside towns? What factors might contribute to levels of poor health in coastal areas? Would any targeted interventions help to address any such issues in these areas?

- 11.1 Health can be both a cause and effect of deprivation. 22.5% of adults in Great Yarmouth have long-term illness or disability. Although life expectancy for men and woman in the Borough is slightly lower than the national average (78 for men, compared with 79.5 nationally, and 82 for women, compared with 83.2 nationally) all-cause mortality rates have fallen, with early death rates from cancer, heart disease and stroke falling in line with the national average.
- 11.2 There is significant variation within the Borough, however. Men in urban wards can expect to live to 72 or 73 years and women to 77, substantially below the national average. There is also more adult obesity and incidence of cancer than elsewhere in Norfolk. Curiously, there is less diabetes but this may be linked to shorter life expectancies overall. Similarly, incidence of dementia is lower in Great Yarmouth than in Norwich. The combination of isolated single-occupier households and troubled individuals is thought to contribute to elevated suicide rates within the deprived Nelson, Central and Northgate wards.
- 11.3 Great Yarmouth is working closely with Active Norfolk, the County Sports Partnership (CSP) and one of 43 CSPs covering England, to improve and increase opportunities for people to be physically active, increase participation in sport and physical activity, and support people of all ages to lead healthy and active lifestyles (for example, leading *health walks* in the Borough).
- 11.4 The Council is currently conducting an extensive activity and sports participation survey to deepen its understanding of residents' activity levels and how local communities access and use facilities. This is the first spatially-focused strategic analysis that Active Norfolk has undertaken; previous surveys have related to specific age cohorts or communities. The data will directly inform local strategy and policy, particularly in relation to the investments required to effect the development and renewal of sports assets, such as the Marina Leisure Centre and historic Wellesley Recreation Ground.

Delivery structures

12. What impact has the Coastal Communities Fund had upon seaside towns and communities? Are any further targeted interventions from Government required?

12.1 *EnterpriseGY* was funded in Coastal Communities Fund Rounds 1 & 3; revenue-based support for start-ups and new businesses and promoting self-employment as a route to economic inclusion. The scheme has helped over 1,000 businesses to start throughout its 11-year history — most of which has been with the direct support of Coastal Communities Fund. It has also funded training, advice and even business awards in the Borough. The outcomes of more recent Coastal Communities Fund applications – covering, for example, enhancements to the historic market – have not yet been advised.

13. To what extent is it currently possible to develop a ‘vision’ for individual seaside towns? Is there a need for longer-term thinking and, if so, is that need currently being met? What role should Government departments, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and other stakeholders play in delivering against such a vision, and is any action required to improve integrated working between these groups?

13.1 It is considered both possible and desirable to develop stakeholder-led visions at a town/borough level (the National Coastal Tourism Authority has a vision too – health, sea air and appealing to childhood memories). The pioneering, stakeholder-lead Greater Yarmouth Tourism and Business Improvement Area Business Improvement Area has democratised the approach to deriving a vision, driving advertising, perceptions, marketing and co-ordinating/commissioning the delivery of complementary activities/events around tourism and culture.

13.2 As outlined in *Section 6*, the Town is actively exploring ways to make its ‘offer’ more coherent for residents, potential residents, tourists and investors, acknowledging the need to distil and communicate the cultural vision and opportunities on offer and promote what makes the place special in a crowded marketplace. Such an approach could: get Great Yarmouth’s story in front of the audiences that matter; increase visitor numbers, their length of stay and per capita spend; encourage private sector collaboration and ownership to grow the local economy; attract more inward investment; attract and retain the best talent. There is clearly an input/support role for input for the Government, the County and the LEP, provided this doesn’t result in the imposition of a top-down approach/solution to the detriment of local interests/stakeholders.

14. Are there fiscal or financial measures available which could help to support the regeneration of seaside towns? Could the Government provide any financial freedoms or investments which would help to generate positive change?

14.1 Fiscal/financial measures that could help to support the regeneration of seaside towns are outlined in the bullet points at the end of *Section 7*. In addition, it’s noted that regional community banks have been shown to address market failure around the provision of SME finance for investment and growth. One such bank is being created in Hampshire; the Hampshire Community Bank, which was first unveiled in 2013, and modelled on Germany’s local public savings banks and local co-operative banks (Sparkasse and Volksbank). Nearly 70% of the banking sector in Germany comprises 1,700 locally-controlled, small banks, lending mostly to productive SMEs. The new bank will focus on “creating credit for productive purposes, mainly to SMEs” and also for housing construction (buy-to-build mortgages) with surplus revenues channelled towards other measures to develop the local economy.

People and place

- 15. What role should local people and local communities play in the regeneration of seaside towns and communities? Do good processes of community engagement, and community resilience and capacity building, currently exist and, if so, could they be applied more widely?**
- 15.1 The nationally-acclaimed Lottery-funded *Neighbourhoods That Work* programme focusses on three urban wards, embedding Neighbourhood Managers to access those people furthest from the labour market, empowering and upskilling them; life-connecters and skill-connecters. Ward-level boards are chaired by local residents and encompass a wide range of stakeholders. The programme is currently in its third year of five and also provides a key interface between the Council and some of its most deprived areas, with engagement and dialogue directly informing the commissioning of services and regeneration priorities. The model has already been adopted by Lincoln and there is significant scope for further replication elsewhere.
- 16. Do any integrated models of regeneration, bringing together local communities, businesses, public sector bodies and others to pursue common goals, currently exist? If so, how do such models seek to promote physical, social and economic regeneration in seaside towns? How can any lessons learnt from such work be applied more widely – and is further innovation required?**
- 16.1 Great Yarmouth aspires to an integrated regeneration framework, a range of measures to link stimulation of the economy to environmental improvements and social and cultural elements through delivery, engagement/consultation (e.g. the third river crossing), collectively-owned campaigns and policies (e.g. the A47 Alliance and Great Yarmouth Economic Strategy) and key stakeholder relationships (e.g. the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust and stakeholder-led entities such as the Greater Yarmouth Tourism and Business Improvement Area). The Town is actively exploring ways to establish and communicate a collectively-owned universal 'offer', identity and sense-of-place to underpin its broader regeneration, inward investment and appeal to potential residents and visitors.

Yours faithfully,

Sheila Oxtoby
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