



Norfolk County Council

▶ **BETTER
TOGETHER,
FOR NORFOLK.**

**NORFOLK COUNTY
COUNCIL STRATEGY
2021-25**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER OF NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL





In June 2019, we launched our strategic plan Together, for Norfolk, outlining our ambitions for our county, its people, its communities and its businesses. When the country went into lockdown in March 2020, we had to put many of our plans on hold.

However, our long-term ambitions and aspirations for the county never changed, and we continue to strive to be one of the highest performing counties in the country, overseeing economic growth, creating jobs and opportunities for the people of Norfolk, while maintaining and cherishing our environment, countryside and heritage.

For a number of years a higher demand for services and changes to how local government is funded has created many challenges for us. Since I became Leader in 2018, despite those challenges we have made good progress in transforming services across the council and ensuring financial stability and sustainability. But given the current financial climate we must continue to look for savings and efficiencies where we can.

Along with the rest of the UK, we now face an even more challenging future as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The crisis took its toll on the people and businesses across Norfolk, with many families losing loved ones, children falling behind in their education, our economy shrinking, and many small and medium sized businesses and workers facing an uncertain future. We have seen hardship, insecurity, mental health worsen, and the learning gap for disadvantaged children and health inequalities highlighted more starkly than ever before.

But ours is a strong, resilient county, awash with potential, and set for growth. Alongside the difficulties, we have also seen a number of opportunities emerge: how different communities can come together to help each other and those in need;

the strength of our partnerships across local government and the voluntary, community and faith sectors; how we can better engage with and listen to our residents, communities and businesses; and ultimately how the council, and local government as a system, works and delivers services.

As we reflect on the past, now is the right time to look to the future. We are at a pivotal point in time, and with such a fundamental shift in our operating context, it is essential that we now update our strategic plan to reflect how our ambitions and priorities, and those expressed by our partners, have evolved to take this into account.

It's our job to lead recovery and renewal and build resilience for the future. The government's Levelling Up agenda and transition to Net Zero recognises ambition for the future and we will take every opportunity offered to promote Norfolk's case everywhere we can to ensure a good deal for Norfolk. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to seize the prospects for long-term change now, so that we can grow our economy to build a stronger, greener, fairer, more inclusive and more sustainable future for Norfolk.

Andrew Proctor
Leader of Norfolk County Council



OUR REFRESHED STRATEGY

Between November 2020 and April 2021, we ran a survey through our **Norfolk Residents' Panel** to understand the impact of Covid-19 on their lives and work, and to identify where they would want us to focus as we recover. Nearly one thousand people responded to tell us their main worries were for small local businesses, unemployment, social care and health, as well as investment in community infrastructure and hubs.

In July 2021, we convened **Rising to the Challenge Together**, which brought together over 100 partners from across all sectors, including local and national thought leaders, to look at the impact of Covid-19 on Norfolk and the opportunities for long-term economic and social recovery.

As an organisation, we committed to using the **common priorities** identified during the event to inform our strategic planning, and to continue our conversations through similar events, thus enabling the environment for actions to happen.

This document identifies the strategic objectives which are our contribution to the above common priorities. It builds on our previous **council plan**, sharpening our focus for the next 4 years. It is a clear statement of our intent, focusing on recovery, and on achieving the renewal and resilience our county needs to be successful.





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Sara Tough
Norfolk County Council



Corrienne Peasgood
City College Norwich



Paul Sanford
Norfolk Constabulary



Chris Starkie
New Anglia LEP



Sara Tough
Norfolk County Council



April Haywood
UK Youth Parliament



Sophie Mattholie
Broadland Youth Advisory Board



Dez Holmes
Research in Practice

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE TOGETHER | Children and Young People Panel



OUR VISION

In Norfolk, we cherish our heritage, we embrace opportunity, and offer an extraordinary place in which to spend a lifetime.



We want Norfolk to be the place where everyone can start life well, live well and age well, and where no one is left behind.



We want our economy to be vibrant, entrepreneurial and sustainable, supported by the right jobs, skills, training and infrastructure.



We want our communities to feel safe, healthy, empowered and connected, their individual distinctiveness respected and preserved.





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OUR ROLE

As the largest democratic body in Norfolk, we have an important role - to give the people we serve every opportunity to improve their lives. The government's ambitious programme to "level up" aims to boost living standards and improve opportunities across the UK.

For us, levelling up is about creating the conditions for people to have good and healthy lives, regardless of who they are or where they live. It is about removing discrimination and barriers to equal lives and enabling all people to participate in their communities. And it is about ensuring that Norfolk claims its fair share of investment to drive growth, prosperity and higher skills so we are not left behind.

Levelling up puts local government centre-stage in delivering these better outcomes, and we are keen to pursue the prize of a deal with government, to leverage more money and powers into the county, for the benefit of the county.





We believe that to truly deliver on levelling up, we also have a central and critical role in championing prevention across our local health and care system, building stronger partnerships with community services to improve health outcomes and quality of life, and to ensure that people remain healthy and independent for as long as possible. To that aim, we want to strengthen the council's role in the Integrated Care System and embed prevention across all our work.

We will also actively champion and contribute to the government's ambition to place the UK as the global leader of accessibility for disabled people, building on the knowledge we have developed through our awarding-winning Disability Confident Leader status. Disabled people can only be independent if they can access services, facilities and the virtual environment by themselves without the help of others. Some barriers will be challenging to address and may be the responsibility of different agencies. So we will strive to work across all sectors and all willing partners to lay foundations for future solutions, and create a more accessible Norfolk.

We led the response to the pandemic, and mobilised the local system to support those most in need among us. We are now ready to mobilise around our recovery and renewal. Whether it is through convening partnerships such as the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance, engagement events such as Rising to the Challenge or drawing down large scale investment such as the £100m+ investment in digital connectivity, we have a track record of ambition and delivery and we want to lead on unlocking the county's potential.

We believe that, building on our county's identity, our size, scale and influence, the council can play a significant and strategic role in delivering growth, opportunities and good quality of life across Norfolk. And we will use our assets, resources and leadership to continue to impact positively on our residents' wellbeing and prosperity.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 4 YEARS

To effect sustainable change in Norfolk, we must work across the council and with our partners to take a whole-system approach to our collective challenges and the levelling up agenda.

We do not believe we have to choose between a vibrant economy, healthy people or resilient communities – they are all interconnected. It is not the individual parts of the system that make it successful, it is the quality of the interaction between them. We want our strategy to make a difference to our county’s social infrastructure, economic infrastructure and physical infrastructure.

It is through improving educational outcomes, growing the skills our key sectors need, helping to create good quality jobs, and putting in place affordable housing and the appropriate infrastructure that we will improve the life-chances of our residents and strengthen our economy. Our priorities are:

- A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
- BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
- HEALTHY, FULFILLING AND INDEPENDENT LIVES
- STRONG, ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
- A GREENER, MORE RESILIENT FUTURE





BETTER TOGETHER, FOR NORFOLK



A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Economic growth, which creates quality jobs with good wages and delivers benefit back into local communities, has a vital role to play in improving the health and wellbeing of residents.

The council has a key leadership role to ensure the local economy can adapt and benefit all. We want to move from being a low-skill, low-wage and low-productivity economy, to high-skill, high-wage, high-value businesses, which are innovative and can capitalise on our strong digital connectivity. We will work closely with our partners and the business community to ensure that growth is inclusive and builds investment and social value into the local economy.

That way we can support people, businesses and our key industries in Norfolk to recover following the Covid-19 pandemic, and to turn recovery into growth, developing their potential for innovation and increasing their productivity.





SKILLS AND HIGH-VALUE JOBS

- We will work hard to address the impacts of the Covid pandemic on unemployment by supporting business recovery, enabling people to reskill for new jobs, start their own business, and by developing clear pathways to employment.
- We will level up our economy by addressing the drivers of socioeconomic inequality based on the foundation of good jobs and a higher skilled and healthier workforce.
- We will work with our partners to increase qualifications and build the skills that meet the needs of the green, high-value and transformational businesses we are aiming to develop and attract.

GROWTH AND INVESTMENT

- We will continue to roll out our economic plan for recovery and growth offering programmes of support for business planning and development, innovation, digitalisation and business incubation, particularly with smaller companies in rural and coastal communities.
- We will develop Norfolk as a centre for innovation in life sciences and supporting new technologies and development of sites supporting new technologies (such as O&M campus in Great Yarmouth) with a strong inward investment proposition that promotes our county as a place to invest.

- We will enable our economy to transition to Net Zero, help businesses decarbonise and secure green jobs for the future, including those relating to Norfolk's sustainable tourism offer, supported by a 5-year investment framework to draw out our priorities and enable us to compete nationally for funding to support growth.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

- We will continue to implement our Strategic Delivery Infrastructure Plan, ensuring that the county's priority programmes for growth and housing are on track.
- We will continue to improve connectivity across Norfolk, so that all Norfolk residents and businesses have access to high quality fixed and wireless broadband and Internet of Things/sensor networks, and harness that connectivity to shape local markets, increase access to services and information, and reduce social isolation.
- We will continue to work with partners across Norfolk to lobby government for powers and investment in critical infrastructure for our county such as dualling the A47 and completing the Norwich Western Link.



BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The impact of Covid-19 on children, young people, and their families is well documented. Disrupted learning, reduced earnings and isolation during lockdown all increased strain and conflict within many families.

Norfolk's children and young people are the future of the county and we would not want to see them labelled as "the Covid generation". We are ardently ambitious for them and want to ensure that this generation of children do not have to live with the knock-on effects of the pandemic for the rest of their lives, either in terms of their own wellbeing or aspirations for the future.

We want all children and young people in Norfolk to flourish, have a safe and supportive home, high aspirations, better educational outcomes and access to well-paid jobs. It is by investing in them to achieve their full potential and develop skills which prepare them for life and work, that we lay the foundations for a more resilient future for them and for our county.





LEVELLING UP OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

- We will work across our whole system to focus on recovery from the pandemic, emotional wellbeing and health, carer support and active lifestyles, making sure we reach those who need support the most.
- We will work to improve our young people's mental health and resilience so they can better engage with education and work opportunities.
- We will collaborate with our partners to strengthen family resilience by tackling the causes of instability such as worklessness, domestic abuse, substance misuse, and support vulnerable or struggling families.

RAISE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- We will implement a programme of work to support learning recovery in all age groups, to address disruption to learning caused by Covid-19.
- We will work with schools and other educational settings, and build on improved connectivity to support better outcomes for children and young people who face additional barriers, and those who are disadvantaged.

- We will achieve educational excellence and high standards for all children and young people by working in partnership with early years providers, schools, colleges and universities.

CREATE BETTER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- We will encourage schools and further education providers to develop programmes, curriculum activities and to upskill, reflecting changes in employment opportunities and skills needs.
- We will work hard with employers to increase the number of supported internships, traineeships and apprenticeships for all young people, and to promote and deliver an increased uptake of apprenticeships.
- We will strive to better engage with and provide skills, careers guidance and employment support for those young people a long way from the job market, those leaving care and those with learning or physical disabilities.

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HEALTHY, FULFILLING AND INDEPENDENT LIVES

We want Norfolk to be a place where everyone has the opportunity to live their lives to the full, with independence and access to the right support at the right time.

We know this isn't the case for everyone. People from some ethnic backgrounds, those with pre-existing health conditions, older people, people with caring responsibilities, those who are disabled or have a learning disability, can be at greater risk of ill health, isolation and poor wellbeing, as seen during the pandemic, the impact of which has both highlighted and widened existing inequalities across physical, mental and social health.

We want to lead the system in Norfolk to focus on prevention and early help, to improve and sustain good health and wellbeing, as well as work with willing partners to create a more accessible Norfolk. We will strive to accelerate health and social care integration to respond to new demands and remove barriers to equal lives, tackling the issues which contribute to widening health inequalities.





LEVELLING UP HEALTH

- We will take a proactive approach to prevention and early help for people at risk of vulnerability, to support them to make positive choices and ensure they do not fall into crisis, while continuing to be the safety net for the most vulnerable people.
- We will explore new ways of working with communities and our partners, to protect and promote good health and inclusion, taking a place-based approach to tackling the causes of poor health outcomes, such as economic insecurity and low skills, quality of housing and lack of quality and access to green spaces.
- We will focus on the personal wellbeing of people of all ages living in Norfolk, in particular those who are lonely or isolated, homeless, have mental illness, or a disability, and those who struggle to be in employment.

LIVING WELL

- We will work to improve our population's health by promoting healthy lifestyles, supporting people to make healthy choices and providing public health services such as health visitors, NHS health checks, stop smoking, mental health support and substance misuse treatment.

- We will build on people's strengths and enable them to live independently in their own home, and will continue to invest in our local independent living housing programme, and our strategic housing partnership to tackle homelessness.
- We will champion and actively contribute to the government's ambition to place the UK as the global leader of accessibility for disabled people, building on the knowledge we have developed through our award-winning Disability Confident Leader status.

BETTER LOCAL SERVICES

- We will work with providers to further improve the quality of the care market in Norfolk, and ensure a range of flexible and diverse services are available in local communities to meet need.
- We will seek to accelerate the integration of health and social care services in Norfolk, taking a lead role on prevention, so residents are served by effective services that improve their lives wherever they live.
- We will work with our partners in the public and voluntary sectors to create joined up networks of information and advice so people can access the services they need, when they need them and where they need them.

▶ **STRONG, ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES**

Norfolk has a strong sense of identity and place. With a mix of urban, rural and coastal communities, each place has its own character, distinctiveness and needs, reflecting Norfolk's rich cultural heritage.

Individuals, families and communities are the best guardians of their own interests. We want to deliver a fundamental shift in how we work in partnership, supporting, facilitating and empowering our many diverse communities to help themselves, building capacity and capability, while improving participation in each place.

We want to change the relationship between public services and the people who use them to allow people to take greater control of their lives, as well as ensuring that we identify those most at need and requiring protection. At the same time, we will work with our partners in the public and voluntary sector and other key stakeholders, such as our armed forces community, to ensure that all our residents have access to good services, information, advice and guidance which enables them to always be in control of their lives.





INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- We will develop a clear framework for co-production to increase opportunities for individuals, organisations and communities, particularly seldom-heard communities, to participate and engage in public life and in developing our services and projects.
- We will review our strategy to support inclusion and community development focusing on engaging proportionately with all our communities and taking steps to seek the views of people who are under-represented.
- We will continue to develop the way we engage and communicate with people, including the better use of digital tools and social media, to make it easier for people to have an active role in the decisions that shape Norfolk's future.

BUILDING CAPACITY

- We will continue to develop the way we work with the voluntary and community sector, collaborating to improve infrastructure support such as providing training, volunteer recruitment and everyday practical advice.

- We will back local community or voluntary sector initiatives through discretionary funding programmes such as our Social Infrastructure Fund, and offer support for grassroots organisations to grow and develop.
- We will strengthen our relationship with Town and Parish Councils, via the Norfolk Association of Local Councils, to ensure we understand what's important to people, and to support local solutions to local issues.

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES

- We will work with community and voluntary sector partners to join up information and services where it makes sense to do so and to share data, learning and expertise to improve local offers and experiences.
- We will actively promote volunteering opportunities within communities as a way of enabling participation, giving back to communities and developing skills in life and work.
- We will seek to devolve powers down to a local level where possible, enabling communities to use their assets to meet their needs.





A GREENER, MORE RESILIENT FUTURE

Norfolk has many areas of outstanding beauty, and it is a clean and safe place to live for our residents. It is also a county with a nationally-important heritage, both natural and in terms of historic buildings and scheduled monuments.

We want to keep it that way and to preserve its quality and integrity for future generations. Over the past year our county has experienced severe localised flooding and rising summer temperatures, highlighting the dangers of poor infrastructure and climate change. Throughout lockdown, we also observed the adverse effects on people's mental health, wellbeing and sense of connection that the absence of quality outdoor spaces and social and cultural interaction had.

We want our communities to be resilient, able to enjoy and benefit from sustainable, inclusive and accessible social infrastructure, including high-quality local facilities, which go beyond basic economic functions like the branch of a bank or a local shop, to make our communities resilient and rewarding places to live.





PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT

- We will continue to implement our Environmental Policy, to protect our county's rich biodiversity, conserve areas of natural beauty such as the Norfolk Broads and Norfolk Coast, promote the efficient use of our natural resources and, working with our partners, achieve 'Net Zero' carbon emissions across our estates by 2030.
- We will accelerate infrastructure that supports clean growth, sustainable housing, electric vehicles charging and the decarbonisation of transport, enabling businesses and people to make choices which build climate resilience.
- We will ensure that each project the council undertakes is assessed for the contribution it will make towards achieving our environmental targets, and work with our providers to put in place measures that, together, achieve the overall targets for Norfolk.

ACCESS TO QUALITY SPACES

- We will continue to improve access to our natural and cultural landscapes, while encouraging residents to use green spaces and cultural assets to improve their mental health and emotional well-being.

- We will deliver our major projects including EXPERIENCE, the Gressenhall Environmental Hub, and the Norwich Castle Gateway to Medieval England project, to enhance our offer to the people of Norfolk, maintaining the major investment in Norfolk by national organisations such as Arts Council England and Sport England.
- We will deliver a step change in sustainable travel across the county, by growing passenger transport and active travel to keep our communities connected and improve access to activities and services across the county.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

- We will continue to support the delivery of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance Strategy to protect Norfolk from the threats of flooding and coastal erosion, through local collaboration and a collective approach to national funding opportunities.
- We will work more effectively with partners to further develop community facilities, libraries, schools, high streets, and arts and culture, for the benefit of local communities.
- We will lead the work of the council's Culture, Health and Wellbeing Group, and continue to identify investment and funding opportunities to develop new Culture, Health and Wellbeing initiatives to combat loneliness and isolation.



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

There is now little doubt that the impacts of Covid-19 and lockdown measures have widened social, economic and health inequalities. Inequality exists between places, such as the economic disparity between different parts of our county, as well as between and amongst communities, with people's life chances and quality of life affected by different factors. In response to this and looking forward, Better Together, for Norfolk sets out an aspiration to improve social mobility through inclusive growth. As a council, we think it's critical that no one is left behind, so that all people can prosper no matter who they are or where they live.

PREVENTION OVER CURE

We want to see a focus on prevention and early help as fundamental in tackling the root causes or emerging issues that create adversity in people's lives. We'll pay particular attention to the factors that promote health and wellbeing. Getting these factors right, will create the conditions to improve people's quality of life, breaking down intergenerational cycles of poor outcomes, reducing the impact of life changing events and ultimately safeguarding good physical and mental health.

A LOCAL APPROACH

We do not believe that one size fits all. Meeting the needs of people in the place they live, means understanding the people and the place. We will deliver better services that meet the needs of residents by joining up care and support with local partners in a place, including with district councils, health partners and the local voluntary and community sector, and targeting support where it is most needed.





BETTER TOGETHER, FOR NORFOLK



OUR COMMITMENTS

We are steadfast in our desire to improve the real-life experiences of people in Norfolk. In delivering our objectives we commit to being:



Forward looking: growing Norfolk's economy and improving skills to create better opportunities for all, as a thriving economy brings about better social value.



Innovative: we want Norfolk to be ahead of the curve, so we will harness the power of innovation, life sciences and digital technology to improve the way we deliver for our residents.



Empowering: we want to build confidence and trust with people and communities, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, so we will enable them to express the issues that matter to them and to take advantage of their strengths and assets.



Collaborative: we don't pretend to have all the answers, so we will work with willing partners across all sectors, with experts and thought leaders, with communities and individuals to develop solutions to real problems - and make them last.



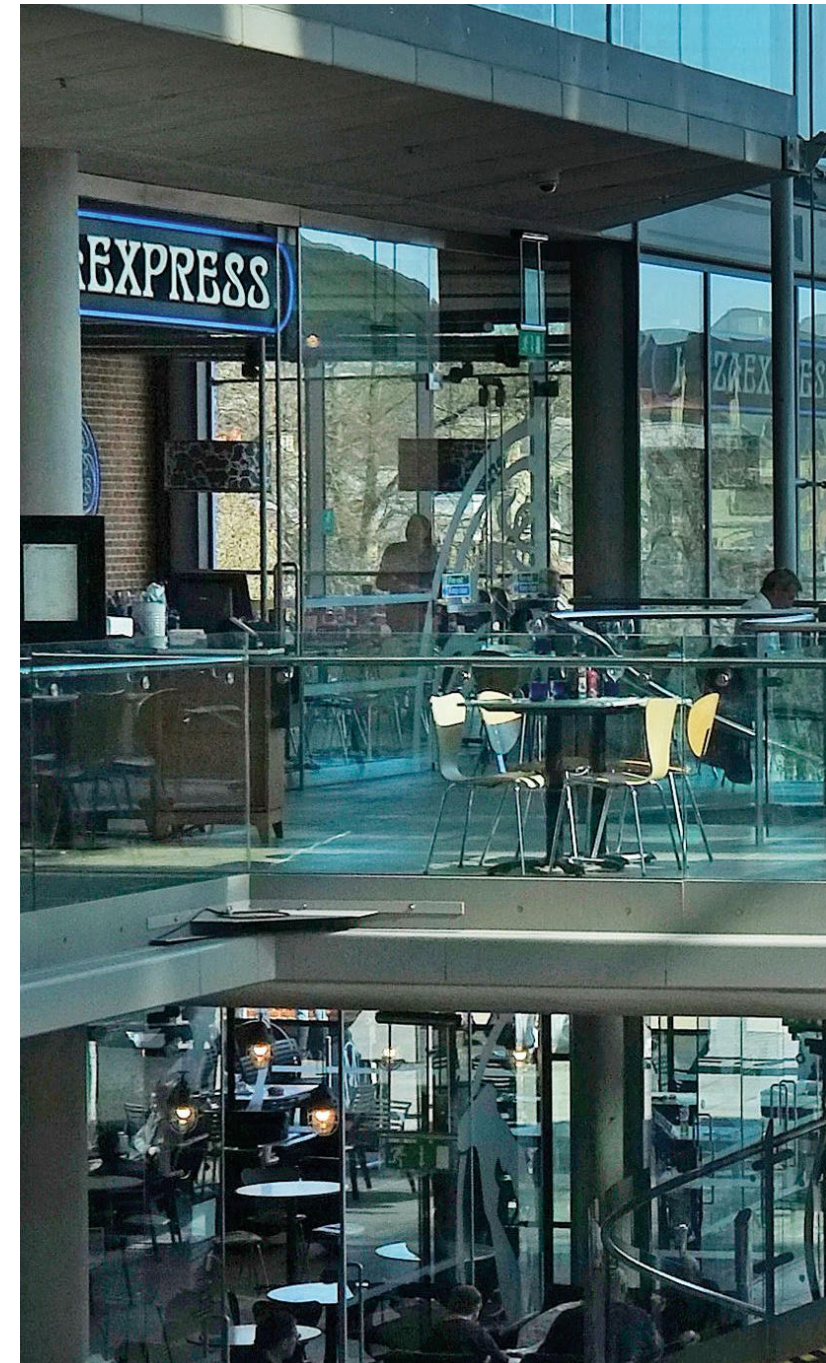
Evidence driven: we want to achieve impact, so we will turn our data into rich insights and intelligence to inform our decisions and choose the approach which will make the greatest difference.

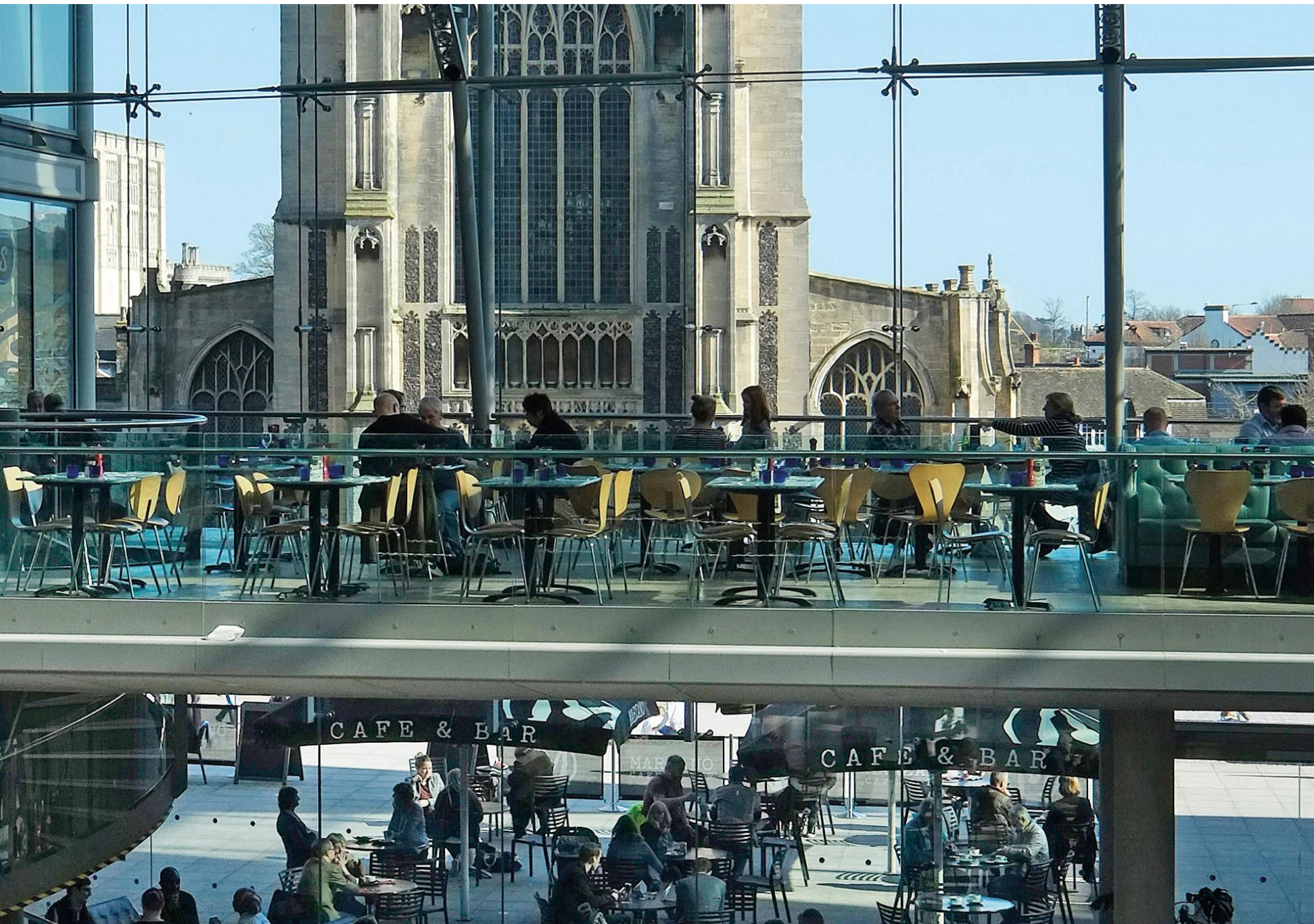


Prudent: we cannot afford to do everything, so we will operate efficiently, using our resources wisely to ensure we can make investments where they are most needed.



Developmental: we can only succeed through our people and we will continue to support them to build the skills needed for the future, as well as attract and retain the best, to be a modern and successful employer of choice.





BETTER TOGETHER, FOR NORFOLK



OUR PLANS FOR DELIVERY

This is a high-level strategy. Rather than describe everything that we do, it sets out what we are focused on and the approaches we will take.

We commission or provide a number of services to our residents delivered in homes, communities and towns. Many of these are universal, provided to all members of the public, such as libraries, public health, the fire service, local roads, public transport, broadband, education services and recycling centres. Others are targeted at specific groups, individuals and families who need different types of support. These include children's social care, services to older people and younger people with learning or physical disabilities, or poor mental health, fostering and adoption services, youth offending services, and drug and alcohol recovery services.

Delivering our strategic priorities requires whole organisation alignment and effort. Our next steps will be to develop our corporate delivery plan, containing the projects that will move us towards our objectives, and the measures to track our progress. We are strengthening our planning and performance mechanisms to boost collaboration on our strategic priorities, and create clear accountability for our cross-cutting objectives including levelling up and action to improve our environment as we transition to Net Zero.

The principle of working in this way will go across all our priorities, across the whole council and across all our partnerships.

WE WILL WORK TIRELESSLY FOR THE PEOPLE OF NORFOLK AND PLAY OUR PART IN DELIVERING A BETTER FUTURE FOR EVERYONE.





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