

**Report to Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum
14th December 2021**

Report of Norfolk Strategic Planning Group

Subject Options for joint working 2022/23 and Funding Requirements

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to set out proposals for county wide joint working under the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member forum for the 2022/2023 financial year. Options for the schedule of work to be undertaken in the 2022/2023 financial year and the report sets out the funding requirements for this work to be completed. The work will help to address any requirement for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to cooperate on strategic cross-boundary issues.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the forum agrees to:

1. Endorse the principle of continued, formal cooperation through the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum supported by a shared Programme function to further the joint working in the areas highlighted in this report.
2. Recommend each district authority formally agrees to contribute £10,000 for the next financial year, with the Broads Authority contributing £5,000.

Financial implications

Each district authority formally agrees to participate in the continued formal cooperation and agrees to contribute £10,000 for the next financial year with the Broads Authority contributing £5,000.

Contact officers

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Further Information

None.

Report

Background

1. Whilst the government published its Planning for the Future white paper on the 6th of August 2020 which proposed the abolishment of the Duty to Cooperate, there's considerable uncertainty about the future of the planning reforms

contained in this paper. With a new minister in place, the reforms are being reviewed. However strategic planning across wider areas has remained a key topic for debate and it is possible that any reforms could strengthen the need for strategic cross-boundary planning. What is clear is that government expects Local Planning Authorities to continue with Local Plan preparation and as such the requirement for strategic cross boundary working continues to remain in place. This includes the requirement to maintain the Statement of Common ground going forward. The Environment Act and its related requirements, such as Biodiversity Net Gain, and the outcomes of COP26 (the Glasgow Agreement) could also be better addressed at a strategic level

2. As such there is significant value in continuing with a work programme into the next financial year to address strategic cross boundary issues going forward. There is also work currently under way which will need to be completed in the next financial year. This paper details the work already underway and proposals for further work to be undertaken in the next financial year.

On-going Strategic Planning Activities

3. There's considerable strategic activity being undertaken which continues going forward, this includes:
 - Maintaining links to other neighbouring counties and their strategic planning work.
 - Maintain links to public bodies and Utilities Companies involved in the preparation of Local Plans e.g. Natural England, Environment Agency, Anglian Water, MMO, UKPN.
 - Maintain links to other key initiatives in the county e.g. Hydrogen East, Greater South East Energy Hub
 - Involvement in key strategies being produced:
 - Transport East Strategy
 - Water Resources East Strategy
 - Norfolk Water Strategy
 - Norfolk Climate Change Partnership
 - Support the county in the production of a county wide Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan
 - Support of Local Plan processes across the county
 - Maintain links to NHS estates and the CCG with regular meetings to share updates on key developments and progress of Local Plans
 - Scope to continue to commission joint studies across the county to reduce costs

Current work continuing into the next financial year

4. There are work programmes already underway that will not be completed in this financial year:

Review of the RAMS mitigation package

5. Subject to agreement from the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum it is proposed to start a review of the mitigation package to address some of the concerns raised at previous Member Forums. The review is detailed in a separate report.

Implementation of RAMS tariff

6. Subject to the approval of all Norfolk Local Planning Authorities the proposed RAMS tariff will be implemented and the processes put in place to start collecting payments at each authority. The agreed governance arrangements will be put in place to start to manage the fund.

Health Protocol Review

7. A review of the Health Protocol is currently underway; the most recent version was agreed in August 2019. Its initial purpose was to better engage NHS colleagues in wider planning discussions and consider impacts of development on clinical service delivery and capacity. It also aimed to build health prevention principles into planning considerations.
8. This review is borne out of a number of factors including:
 - Refining the process for collecting and responding to health data and requests for resource arising from new development from the NHS;
 - Recognising the changing nature of the NHS and care system. The previous version reflected the then new landscape of the Sustainability Transformation Partnership (STP), but this has now moved into Primary Care Networks (PCN) and Integrated Care System (ICS) formation as well as the merging of previous five Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) into a single body
 - A stronger emphasis on health prevention principles, recognising, for example, the revised Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework (NSPF), national moves toward design guides at local levels and the importance of preventing ill health and considering how Covid-19 has changed some of the assumptions previously held about travel to work and housing etc.

What strategic planning work is required in 22/23?

Replacement of the East of England Forecast Model

9. The East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM) was developed by Oxford Economics to project economic, demographic and housing trends in a consistent fashion and in a way that would help in the development of both Regional and Local Strategies. Responsibility for the model passed to Cambridge Econometrics a few years ago. The Model's owner, the East of England Local Government Association, has decided to discontinue updating the East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM). As such local authorities will no longer have access to the employment data it provided. LA officers will need to look at potential options to replace this source of data going forward which may include working with neighbouring authorities and/or the New Anglia LEP.

What strategic planning work maybe required in 22/23?

Update of the NSPF

10. Once further clarification is provided by central government through new legislation and a revised NPPF, it will become clearer if Norfolk Local Planning Authorities can continue to address strategic planning matters through a revision to the NSPF. It is likely that further details of what it required will be announced either before or during the new financial year. It is likely that work will then need to commence on updating or replacing the current NSPF.

Review of the county wide HELAA Methodology

11. The county wide Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology is now 5 years old and based on the 2012 version of the NPPF. As such it would be sensible for a review to be completed. New planning legislation may impact any review so it is proposed to commence this work once further details are announced by central government on planning reforms.

How will this work be delivered?

Resource Requirements

12. To complete the full programme of work highlighted in the previous sections it is proposed that we maintain the existing shared programme resource with some planning officer support provided by each district. Resource requirements from each authority will continue to be kept to a minimum but it is important that all authorities support the work to ensure they are comfortable with direction it is taking.
13. The shared resource will oversee and manage the workstreams highlighted above and any associated steering groups required. The shared resource will also continue to coordinate other joint planning activities as listed in the first section of this report including maintaining links to neighbouring counties, public bodies, Utilities, NHS estates and the CCG. The shared resource will also continue to provide input into the other strategic work outlined in paragraph 3.

How would this be funded?

14. The existing NSPF funding was provided by the 7 Norfolk district authorities and the Broads Authority. Norfolk County Council will continue to provide officer support for the joint working of the NSPG and Planning Member Forums. The budget expected to be carried forward in to the 2022/23 financial year is already sufficient to cover the cost of the shared programme management resource (which it is proposed will continue to be hosted by Norwich City Council). However, it is proposed that each Authority continues to contribute £10,000/£5,000 in the case of the Broads Authority for the next financial year; this additional budget will cover any ad hoc administration costs and allow for an

external budget to fund work for the GI RAMS review. It will also cover work potentially required to review the NSPF subject to further clarification from the government of changes proposed under the Planning White Paper.