

**Report to** Norfolk Strategic Planning Member Forum  
1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

**Report of** Norfolk Strategic Planning Group

**Subject** Options for joint working 2021/22 and Funding Requirements

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to set out proposals for county wide joint working under the Norfolk Strategic Planning Member forum beyond the completion of the third version of the Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework. Options for the schedule of work would be undertaken in the 2021/2022 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 administration 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 (Broads Authority £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 (Broads Authority £5,000).

### **Contact officers**

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### **Further Information**

None.

## Report

### Background

1. The government published its Planning for the Future white paper on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August. Amongst the many changes to the planning system proposed by the paper is the abolishment of the Duty to Cooperate. However the paper specifies that the government is giving further consideration to the way in which strategic cross-boundary issues, such as major infrastructure or strategic sites, can be adequately planned for, including the scale at which plans are best prepared. There is no mention of any changes to the Statement of Common ground and if this will still be required going forward.
2. The government also published proposals for a new standard methodology for assessing local housing need, this could significantly increase the overall county wide housing need by as much as 40%. If this was to happen it would strengthen the need for closer working on strategic planning matters going forward.
3. 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. Although there is uncertainty about what the requirements will entail there are other significant benefits to continue with the current strategic planning activities completed under this remit, these included:
  - Maintaining links to other neighbouring counties and their strategic planning work.
  - Maintain links to public bodies and Utilities involved in the preparation of local plans eg Natural England, Environment Agency, Anglian Water, MMO, UKPN.
  - Maintain links to other key initiatives in the county eg Water Resources East, Hydrogen East, Greater South East Energy Hub
  - Support the county in the production of a county wide Infrastructure Delivery Plan and any potential economic or growth strategies
  - 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

### What strategic planning work is recommended?

#### Norfolk Design Guide/Charter

4. The white paper strengthens the need for local design initiatives and the work of the NSPF completed this year has highlighted that design guidance could help with both climate change and healthy living initiatives. As such there is a strong case for looking at a Norfolk Design Guide or Charter. Suffolk are in the process of completing a similar exercise (see <https://www.suffolkdesign.uk/> for more details). The initial steps would be to investigate how this is best achieved and to what level all authorities are willing to work to a single design guide. It is clear for this to succeed that external and community involvement would be required and we would also need to understand in more detail any proposed changes to the NPPF and legislation. It is likely that external support will be required for this work which will need to be commissioned.

### **Implementation of RAMS tariff**

5. Subject to the approval of all Norfolk authorities to the Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy there will be a requirement to implement and start collection of the new RAMS Tariff. Exact details about how this will be collected and managed are yet to be formulated but member approval will be sort prior to implementation.

### **Review of the county wide HELAA Methodology**

6. The county wide Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Methodology is now nearly 5 year old and based on the 2012 version of the NPPF. That fact it is out of date has been picked up by external parties and could potentially be used as part of an appeal or by climate change groups in the future, it is recommended that this is updated in line with any new NPPF.

### **Commissioning of new evidence to support future local plans**

7. Whist the information contained in the White paper lacks much detail, it is likely that evidence in a number of areas will need to be created or updated. If this is completed jointly it is likely to result in significant cost savings. Further details of what might be required will come forward once the updated NPPF is published but some evidence completed jointly is now quite old and there is a case for updating evidence like the visitor pressure study last completed in 2015.

### **Possible assessment of a countywide approach to new settlements**

8. The new standard methodology being proposed by the government will potentially increase the overall county wide housing need by 40%. Finding this level of new additional development using existing towns and villages will be challenging. Members are asked to consider support for a county wide task and finish group to be setup to assess the need for a new settlement and suitable locations for the settlement.

### **Possible Requirements to update the NSPF**

9. 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. Requirements around the new standard methodology may result in the need for greater cooperation at a county level.

## **How will this work be delivered?**

### **Resource Requirements**

10. 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.

11. The shared resource will oversee and manage the following workstreams and associated steering groups:
- Norfolk Design Guide/Charter
  - Implementation of RAMS tariff
  - Review of the county wide HELAA Methodology
  - Investigation into a new settlement in Norfolk
  - Commissioning of new evidence to support future local plans
  - Update the NSPF if required by any future revision to the NPPF.
  - 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.

### **How would this be funded?**

12. The budget expected to be carried forward in to the 2021/22 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 for the next financial year; this additional budget will cover any ad hoc administration and allow for external work to be commissioned to deliver a county wide Design Guide/Charter and to cover set up costs for the RAMS tariff. If additional external work is identified this would need to be funded separately.
13. The existing NSPF funding was provided by the 7 Norfolk district authorities and the Broads authority and it is proposed that this is continued. For the NSPF the Broads contribution was half that of other authorities and it is proposed that their contribution remains the same. Norfolk County Council currently funds the East of England Forecast Model (c £4,000) and will continue to provide officer support for the joint working.

### **Conclusion**

14. For a contribution from each Local Authority of just £10,000, by the end of this financial year the Norfolk Strategic Planning Programme will have delivered significant benefits to it's member authorities, this includes:
- The completion of an updated NSPF which has been successfully used to demonstrate the duty to cooperate at a number of planning inspections and has been used regularly as an example of good practice across the country.
  - The completion of the Norfolk wide Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact avoidance strategy to support habitat regulations within local plans
  - The completion of a detailed strategy to support the needs of the Elderly population in Norfolk – the fastest growing age group in this county.
  - Detailed analysis of the impacts that local plans can make to supporting the climate change initiatives across the county
  - Improved working with neighbouring counties and other public bodies.
  - Closer working relationships with health partners to support the planning process for health infrastructure.

This represents significant value over completing these tasks individually. It is therefore recommended that the programme continues for the next financial year with the work programme highlighted in this report.