

Supporting Economic Growth in Norfolk – January 2021

Introduction

Last year was a challenging year for all of us, 2020 will be a year we will not forget and although the next few months will continue to be tough, there are better times in sight, with the NHS vaccination programme ramping up. Perhaps now more than ever before, COVID-19 has demonstrated the vital importance of setting sustainable budgets and working together to support business in our region and build better foundations for the future.

Norfolk County Council's long term business plan, <u>Together for Norfolk</u> (TfN) continues to be implemented, our challenge is to respond to the current economic conditions in the context of TfN.

We have pledged as a council to work with all our partners to help as many businesses as possible to survive, and as many people as possible to stay in work or secure alternative work or training. We will continue to drive the identification, development and promotion of clean growth opportunities, such as the Offshore Wind Operations and Maintenance Base in Great Yarmouth. In response to the pandemic we created the significant Norfolk Strategic Fund to kickstart recovery projects. In the next year we will focus on local markets and supply chains, as well as where public money is best spent locally. We also look optimistically to the future and when it is safe to do so, promote the county as a safe place to live, work and visit – one that is open for business.

This document outlines some of the council's achievements in 2020, as we continued to invest in infrastructure, boost tourism and achieve better IT connectivity. It also touches on our leading role in supporting vulnerable people and communities during the pandemic. It also covers key developments taking place in Norfolk in 2021 and how we will continue to support new and existing businesses.

If you would like to find out more about any the initiatives in this briefing document or ask any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us on <u>haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk</u>

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Andrew Proctor Leader, Norfolk County Council

Boosting Tourism

In July, Norfolk County Council in partnership with all seven district councils and Visit East of England, put in place a £2.225m tourism sector support package from the Norfolk Strategic Fund, to help the tourism sector to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

The project aims to make Norfolk as safe as possible for both visitors to the county and Norfolk residents. Funding has been allocated to each District Council and to Visit East of England and will be used to help create a quality visitor experience whilst maintaining key Public Health messages to ensure we continue to keep COVID-19 figures as low as possible.

EXPERIENCE is a €23m project led by Norfolk County Council, which has 14 partners across England and France and is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

Launched in 2014, the project will support organisations to develop unique autumn and winter visitor 'experiences' authentic to the area to welcome people back when it is safe to do so and boost the year-round tourist economy. This will include free training and tools, such as support with adaptation and diversification, developing new experiences, and becoming more sustainable and accessible.

Whilst travel to or around Norfolk is not advised during the coronavirus pandemic, EXPERIENCE remains on track to help support recovery of the visitor economy over the next few years.

By 2023, the scheme aims to have:

- attracted 20 million new visitors to the region
- generated €1 billion of extra spending
- increased visitor spending by five percent in the off-season alone.

For more information about EXPERIENCE – please visit their website here

Brexit

Norfolk County Council have been helping businesses prepare for the new rules that came into force on 1st January 2021. We have engaged with businesses and other stakeholders about Government support that could be provided to help businesses get to grips with the new rules as well as signposting businesses, from our social media channels, to the latest government guidance around the UK's withdrawal from the EU. <u>The new Border Operating Model</u> is an extensive guide that all importers and exporters will now need to follow.

We took steps to ensure that the UK's exit from the EU was a smooth one for businesses in Norfolk. Click here to read our <u>'EU Transition Strategy'</u>.

Connectivity

Keeping the whole of Norfolk connected, through fast and reliable broadband has always been one of Norfolk County Council's top priorities. In 2020, it became even more important - businesses and employees were forced to move to online working. Families and friends who couldn't meet in person also had to organise virtual get togethers.

That's why we are proud to say that last year we managed to achieve 95% broadband coverage across the county through the <u>Better Broadband for Norfolk</u> <u>programme</u>. This will continue with a further £11.9m to be invested in the Better Broadband for Norfolk scheme, rolling out high-speed fibre optic networks across the county. There has also been £8m invested in the <u>Norfolk Local Full Fibre Network</u> – bringing high speed broadband to schools, libraries and the council's corporate estate.

Our <u>Go Digital programme</u>, which launched in November, aims to help companies increase their online business. The service provides one-to-one consultancy and business vouchers to help 40 micro, small and medium sized businesses to do more with digital. As it was immediately over subscribed we are exploring ways to scale up further.

In terms of improvements to digital infrastructure, work to implement future-proof Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP) technology (where fibre is laid all the way from the exchange to people's front doors), is set to get underway within the next 12 months, once engineers have carried out detailed planning and survey work. The Council was successful in securing £2.056m from the Government's Getting Building Fund in June 2020 towards our Local Full Fibre Networks programme.

The Council also made a successful bid to pilot <u>the largest free public sector Low</u> <u>Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN) in the UK</u>, covering Norfolk and Suffolk, which enables individuals and businesses to prototype 'Internet of Things' technologies and sensors. The initial project will deliver 110 gateways in Norfolk and 110 in Suffolk aiming to get near 100% ubiquitous coverage. The LoRaWAN infrastructure provides the foundation for a whole ecosystem that could transform our economy by:

- Teaching school children and students about the technology, increasing interest in coding careers
- Allowing new entrepreneurs to try out and demonstrate their ideas,
- The creation of new businesses in Norfolk and Suffolk based on innovation, data and new ideas
- Enabling remote rural solutions where mobile phone networks are inadequate

As a result of these initiatives, Norfolk County Council was proud to be named 'Digital council of the year' at the 2020 Connected Britain awards.

Aims for 2021 and beyond:

- 96% Superfast broadband for end of 2021/22.
- Invest £2m of Defra funding to increase digital connectivity for rural businesses
- Invest £8m of government funding on circuit fibre upgrades for sites across Norfolk
- Leverage the Council's influence and assets to improve on existing mobile phone technology and prepare for 5G connectivity

Environment

Carbon reduction is a key driver to the plans listed above, not only in encouraging changes in attitudes, but in material action. <u>The Low Carbon Innovation Fund 2</u> programme, developed with UEA, seeks to invest £11m in ventures in Norfolk, Suffolk Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire that make measurable reductions in greenhouse gases. The first projects have already been agreed.

Also seeking to deliver on the Council's Environment Policy objectives, a key project being funded from the Norfolk Strategic Fund is the development of a Water Management Plan for the county. This is being undertaken by Water Resources East, the water management partnership for the region, led by Anglian Water. This Plan is vital to future farming and housing development planning in what is one of the driest parts of the country.

Supporting delivery of both the Council's Environment Policy and Local Transport Plan, a partnership was established with the LEP, Suffolk County Council and Norfolk districts to take forward future opportunities for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. A strategy for the two counties is in development and an agreement has been signed with UK Power Networks to investigate, in partnership with Norwich City Council, the viability of on-street EV charging in Norwich.

We want to continue to embed modern methods of construction and the move towards '<u>Passivhaus</u>' standards are further challenges that cross into the skills agenda.

Helping Norfolk Businesses Through Covid-19

The Council's work to support economic growth is shaped by the Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy and the Council's 'Together for Norfolk' Business Plan, launched in 2019. However, in light of the pandemic we worked at pace with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to develop a targeted '<u>Restart' Plan</u> for both counties, with our own contribution to it outlined in our <u>Norfolk Delivery Plan</u>.

Both plans were approved by the council in July and provide our current framework for the pandemic response. This framework will be refreshed during 2021, as the long-term requirements for the recovery become clearer.

Central to the Norfolk Delivery Plan we established the Norfolk Strategic Fund. We worked with the LEP and district colleagues to pool £6.75m to kickstart our response to the pandemic, with both a range of projects carried out and grants provided to businesses.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Covid-19 economic recovery Restart Plan is co-ordinated by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and is the post-pandemic recovery plan for the two counties. The plan brings together commitments and actions from local authority, private sector, third sector and education organisations across Norfolk and Suffolk to outline the key activities in place to help our region's economy restart after the Covid-19 pandemic.

It complements local recovery plans being developed at county and district levels, which will cover additional activity, individual places and health and education. The plan will also feed into the Government's national recovery plan.

Read more about the plan on <u>New Anglia's website here</u>

Changes to working patterns because of the pandemic will offer both opportunities and challenges to our high streets and market towns. We've published our <u>Market Town Network Improvement Strategies</u> and are planning to engage in further discussions with local stakeholders during the next year. This will no doubt also be a key focus for Government and the LEP in terms of pandemic impacts, particularly around hospitality and retail.

Alongside the support provided to businesses from central government, Norfolk County Council responded to the needs of local businesses.

Below is a list of some of the actions we took last year:

- We worked with New Anglia LEP and developed a <u>personal protective</u> equipment (PPE) database
- We worked with local businesses to provide PPE for NCC care workers initially, and then county wide for care homes and the NHS. Over 800 PPE products were sourced. Bullards Gin responded instantly and began making hand sanitizer

- Advice offered from <u>New Anglia Growth Hub</u> and the <u>Business and Intellectual</u> <u>Property Centre (BIPC) Norfolk</u>.
- We have continued working with New Anglia LEP and partners to help businesses find the staff they need to continue operating during coronavirus.
- BIPC Norfolk offered the Reset. Restart programme a series of free local 1to-1 support sessions, workshops and networking events for businesses.
- <u>Innovation grant mentoring project</u>- a free innovation mentoring and bid writing project to help smaller businesses secure the funding they need to develop their project ideas.
- We supported the <u>Financial Industries Group</u>, whose extraordinary meeting in May agreed to commission research on the effects of Covid-19 and set up further webinars to support members
- Norfolk County Council are funding a new initiative by the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, the Knowledge Hub, which will create a central point of information for business support, webinars and skills support to aid recovery

Infrastructure Improvements

Our investment in Norfolk's infrastructure continued throughout 2020. These projects will secure jobs, economic growth and investment to our county. This saw the refresh of our <u>Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan</u> (SIDP) which sets out Norfolk's high-level infrastructure priorities for the next 10 years. These priorities will help to deliver significant economic growth in the county. The SIDP helps us and our partners co-ordinate implementation, prioritise activity and respond to funding opportunities.

The Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan saw the addition of important electricity upgrade projects at Attleborough and Snetterton Heath, while funded projects included the completion of Thetford transport network improvement strategy and the identification of transport infrastructure that could help to mitigate transport impacts of growth.

Transport

We also refreshed our Transport for Norwich Strategy and our county-wide <u>Local</u> <u>Transport Plan to 2036</u>.

Transport for Norwich received a boost to the continued delivery of our Local Transport Plan priorities as we were able to secure $\frac{\pounds 59m}{\pounds 52m}$ for sustainable transport, from the Transforming Cities programme including a $\pounds 32m$ allocation to the County Council to improve walking, cycling and public transport.

The funding will deliver vital infrastructure improvements to improve travel times for bus passengers on the most popular transit routes, giving city bus operator, First Eastern Counties, confidence to invest a further £18m in its fleet and local services. All projects will be delivered through the <u>Transport for Norwich</u> partnership, with an additional £9m being allocated from local council and private contributions.

Our Local Transport Plan to refresh place-based transport strategy work in Norwich, Kings Lynn and Gt Yarmouth (to name but a few) will progress work on the commitment to deliver net zero and improve external funding opportunities.

One of the priorities in our Norfolk Delivery Plan was to retain the environmental benefits of lockdown, which saw more people walk and cycle, both for leisure and access to work and education. The Council conducted lockdown travel surveys, receiving almost 100,000 individual pieces of feedback. We secured £1.5m from the Government's Active Travel Fund to facilitate social distancing measures to help pedestrians; assist businesses to reopen safely and to put in place walking and cycling infrastructure.

Norwich Western Link

The development of a Norwich Western Link, to connect the Broadland Northway, formerly known as the Northern Distributor Road (NDR), from the A1067 to the A47 west of Norwich, is one of our top infrastructure priorities. Since construction began on Broadland Northway there have been sustained calls to fill in the 'missing link'.

In May 2020, the Department for Transport (DfT) approved our Strategic Outline Business Case, meaning the project has conditional entry into DfT's 'Large Local Majors' funding programme and awarding us more than £1 million of development funding for the project in the 2020/21 financial year. More information on the Norwich Western Link can be found <u>here</u>

Great Yarmouth's Third River Crossing

This is one of Norfolk County Council's most significant infrastructure development projects in recent years and will integrate with several other local development projects set to transform the town of Great Yarmouth. The crossing will link the A47 at Harfrey's roundabout to the port and the enterprise zone on the other side of the river. It will help to ease traffic congestion on the town's roads, shortening journey times and improving journey reliability, as well as supporting wider plans and work to maximise investment, regeneration and economic growth opportunities in the town and wider borough

Construction work is set to begin on the Third River Crossing early in January 2021, with more than 50 local employment and training opportunities being created by the main contractor BAM Farrans and the wider supply chain during the delivery of the project, leaving a lasting legacy for the local area and its people. More information can be found <u>here.</u>

Long Stratton Bypass

Delivery of a bypass at Long Stratton is linked to the aims and objectives stated within the already adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the Long Stratton Area Action Plan (LSAAP). It is also a priority infrastructure project for Norfolk County Council and is considered key to supporting the delivery of much needed housing and employment growth within the area.

We will submit a funding application to DfT in early 2021, and subject to local approval, the target date for work to start on construction is mid-2023, with the road open to traffic before the end of 2024.

Aims for 2021 and beyond:

Great Yarmouth Incubator project

Norfolk County Council have been involved in scoping, and commissioning feasibility work into an offshore wind focussed incubator in the Great Yarmouth South Denes area, to help service and grow the offshore wind sector. The project has successfully achieved its place within the Great Yarmouth Borough Council Town Deal, submitted on the 11th December. Decisions expected by end of March 2021.

Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan (NSIDP)

Some 34 key projects have been identified to boost sustainable and planned growth in Norfolk over the next 10 years.

The 2020 Norfolk Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Plan (NSIDP) will help the county council to ensure existing and planned infrastructure links people to jobs, homes and local amenities as well as connecting businesses with customers.

Four new projects appeared in the 2020 plan:

East Norwich Regeneration Area

The regeneration of the East of Norwich, - which includes the former Colman's/Britvic sites at Carrow Works, the Deal Ground and the Utilities Ground, has been a longstanding ambition of both Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council. It was finally given the green light in 2020. The regeneration scheme could pave the way for thousands of homes and jobs. The sites that make up the East Norwich area (the Deal Ground, including land in Trowse; Utilities site; and Carrow Works) total about 50 hectares. The plan envisages that the quarter could provide up to 4,000 new homes and 100,000 sq m of employment space, accommodating up to 6,000 new jobs.

Great Yarmouth operation and maintenance campus

Working in partnership with Great Yarmouth Borough Council (GYBC) and the port to create a campus style facility at the river mouth. Plans include; new quays, pontoons, land assembly and other features to provide up to 4ha of total space. We hope to attract a major manufacturer to the campus, as well as expanding the outer harbor. Alongside this, we will continue to support GYBC to develop a new energy park.

Burlingham Country Park

Norfolk County Council owns the 3,000 acre Burlingham Estate, near Acle, and has been discussing how best to use the site for several years. Around £60,000 is to be drawn from pooled business rates to carry out a feasibility study and, pending that, the park could be created using developer funding, community infrastructure levy cash and County Hall money.

The park will aim improve health and wellbeing, mitigate for climate change and biodiversity loss, be easily accessible by public transport, benefit the economy of the local area as well as alleviating recreational pressure on nearby designated areas and finally provide a legacy that can also be valued by future generations.

Smart Energy Technology Institute (SETI)

SETI is a planned research and innovation initiative aiming to create the fastest collaborative research testbed in Europe. Working in conjunction with the University of East Anglia, it will be a science, technology and business asset for the region that will push the boundaries of leading science research and benefit the UK as a whole.

SETI will nurture a unique ecosystem, supporting research, innovation, benchmarking and validation of new applications and services, through large-scale testbed experiments using the latest machine learning, AI and digital communications technologies across the East of England's key sectors.

Innovations in The Care Sector

The Care Sector is one of the biggest growth sectors in Norfolk, as well as being a top priority for Norfolk County Council. The Adult Social Care team at Norfolk County Council has been working hard to support and innovate inside the care market, to help both the delivery of care and businesses. Below are some of our achievements over the past 12 months, with some information on what future plans.

Video Care Phone Pilot for Day Service Users

In March 2020, all Day Service buildings were closed due to the ongoing pandemic and it is clear that a return to buildings-based services in unlikely in the near to medium term. To resolve this NCC has acquired funding to pay for 200 video care phones. These are locked down tablets that only allow the user to make video calls.

Working closely with key day service providers we intend to support them to develop innovative digital approaches to maintain contact with and continue to support people under lockdown. The pilot will run for 12 months and be fully evaluated so that key learning can be shared with day service providers so that through the use of digital technology service provision can be improved and providers can operate more efficiently and support the long term sustainability of these vital businesses

Electronic Care Records Pilot Project

Research conducted by NCC in January 2020 indicated that approximately a third of residential care homes in Norfolk were using some form of digital care record. This research also indicated that a significant number of barriers potentially exist as to why residential care homes have not already implemented electronic care records.

The intention, in 2021, is to develop a pilot that will work closely with a small cohort of residential care homes to understand the barriers that are stopping them from implementing this digital solution and to develop mitigation plans to overcome these barriers. It is envisaged that a suite of interventions will then be developed that will help the care homes procure the most appropriate digital solution for their needs.

If successful, this pilot could then be developed into a more permanent programme of support that looks to increase the uptake of digital care record solutions across the sector.

Developing skills in health and social care

From September 2020-22, the developing skills in health and social care (DSHSC) project, will provide fully funded qualifications to staff working in the adult health and social care sector across Norfolk and Suffolk.

The project is led by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, working with a range of local colleges, training providers, and other partners.

The aim of the project is to empower people working in the sector to develop new skills. This will enable them to continue providing high-quality care to local people.

The scheme aims to achieve the following in 2021 and beyond

- Increased job satisfaction and retention
- Increased opportunities for career progression and higher earning potential
- Increased uptake into longer-term learning opportunities (e.g. apprenticeships), especially among groups who may face barriers accessing education
- Increased quality in care provision, as evidenced through CQC ratings
- Increased integration and co-ordination of education and training opportunities across health and social care

For more information about the project, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/developingskills

The DSHSC project is part-funded by the European Social Fund.



Inward Investment

In 2020, the inward investment teams of Norfolk and Suffolk County councils merged and now fit within the Local Enterprise Partnership. This led to significant improvement in local and national engagement. In 2020 we saw over 60 enquiries generated in and we have over 80 in the pipeline. In Norfolk alone we created 89 new jobs. The Invest East project meeting projected outputs for this year saw over 100 SMEs and start-ups supported, with approximately £900k investment raised.

This year we saw better engagement with Department for International Trade. Meaning there is a High Potential Opportunity bid, centered on Norwich Research Park. This will likely present a market opportunity to attract investment to create products that improve physical and cognitive health by developing new food innovations using our cutting-edge plant science and agri-food expertise, infrastructure and assets.

2020 also saw us develop propositions around Precision Medicine, Fintech, Medtech, AI and Cyber Security.

Aims for 2021 and beyond:

- Land a major manufacturer linked to offshore renewables to Gt Yarmouth
- Developing substantive action plans in conjunction with Sector Groups (incl Energy, Agri-food and Tech):
 - o Identification of commercial opportunities across our key sectors
 - Developing key messages and propositions, and identifying target audiences
 - Developing lead generation activity

- Investigate new overseas investment markets on the back of new trade deals
- Assessing the impact of Covid-19 (and the response) on inward investment
- Aligning our key assets (eg property) with our sector offers.
- Improving the way we manage our key business accounts in partnership with District colleagues.

Skills and Employment Initiatives

We want to promote careers in Norfolk, particularly in emerging sector growth areas, and in doing so create opportunities at all levels and for all people who want to work. We want to help young people get into employment and encourage businesses to hire more workers.

Here's some of the work we did to achieve these goals in 2020:

- Created <u>Recruit, Retain, Reward Project</u>, providing a financial incentive to SMEs to take on a new apprentice aged 16-24, or to reemploy an apprentice made redundant as a result of Covid-1919. (By the end of December 2020 we had 92 successful applications from across all Norfolk districts, with 92% supporting new apprentices, and 8% apprentices made redundant due to Covid-1919. Of these, 71% were aged 16-18 and 29% 19-24.)
- LIFT (Local Investment in Future Talent), supporting individuals by providing training and work experience, came to a successful close, with 87 organisations and over 1,000 individuals supported. (174 of those individuals transitioned from unemployment or inactivity into employment or job search - compared to the 49 (10%) planned. Nearly 300 obtained accredited units of level 2 and 3 qualifications and around 25% achieved unaccredited training beneficial to their organisations)
- The Digital Employer engagement project worked with over 300 businesses, identifying the current and future digital skills needs in these organisations – working with further education to develop provision to meet local skill needs. (Phase two of the project will be implemented in 2021 and will include focus on increasing digital access for businesses, raising productivity through digital use and increasing digital skills for those seeking employment (prominently targeting Covid-19 affected sectors).
- The Community Grants programme, targeting small voluntary sector organisations, is supporting individuals who are less able to access the labour market. It is delivering 43 projects, supporting over 1300 people, with grants totalling over £800,000

 The Kickstart programme is a £2 billion government subsidised programme aimed at 16-24-year olds who are receiving Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. It is open for new placements until 31 December 2021. Organisations interested in providing work placements through the scheme should contact <u>kickstart@norfolk.gov.uk</u> for more information

Aims for 2021 and beyond:

- The launch of the Employer Training Incentive Project, a grant scheme to help SMEs in sectors most affected by Covid-19-1p, partly funded by the Norfolk Strategic Fund .It seeks to provide employees with the skills they need to support the survival, diversification and growth of the business they work for – as well as their own personal development
- Our CHANCES programme, is a £5m project, aimed at helping those furthest from the job market back into employment. Conceived before the pandemic, this project is even more important as we prepare for the recovery and seek to ensure that no one is left behind. We have a target to support over 2,600 people across the county over a 3 year period
- The Youth Pledge for Employers project is about to launch and aims to support over 200 businesses across Norfolk, developing 'work inspiration', industryrelated learning, extended work experience and employment opportunities for young people aged 16-24. It also seeks to meet the aspirations of the young people themselves, and increase their potential to successfully enter the local workforce

Some examples of how Norfolk County Council is Backing Business

- The Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Norfolk, run by Norfolk County Council's Library & Information Service, can offer help to start-ups and small businesses, with most services being free of charge.
- Last year we strengthened our Trusted Trader scheme A £168,898 grant has been awarded by the Norfolk Strategic Fund (NSF) in recognition of projects that support the county's economic recovery during and after Covid-19.
- We introduced the Innovation Grant Mentoring Project Launched helping owners of small to medium sized businesses to apply for innovation grants to support their business.
- We developed the Agri-food Intelligence and Feasibility project in partnership with NALEP and Suffolk County Council and the business development team tendered a research project, won by Savills. The research into the Agri-food sector in Norfolk and Suffolk will provide

greater understanding and evidence of areas of specialism, gaps or weak points, relationships and opportunities. This research will help us develop projects and programmes to grow and support our sector, and to help us to construct and present key messages to attract and retain inward investment.

- Norfolk Film Sector Research: An award of £26,000 from Pooled Business Rates, towards £52,000 project (matched by NCC and district councils) following Business Development Team's successful bid. Feasibility project to assess value filming could bring to Norfolk's creative sector, with an assessment of assets / filming locations. Project has commenced with steering group set up and procurement for feasibility work underway. Supplier will be announced at the end of January 2021 for this ground-breaking research into the Norfolk film sector.
- Pub is the Hub: the team support this local initiative to encourage pubs to diversify and offer additional community services. In May the Ferry Inn Stokesby opened its village shop

This document will be circulated to representatives of the business sector via the Norfolk Chambers of Commerce, with feedback and questions invited to be sent to <u>HaveYourSay@Norfolk.gov.uk</u>.