

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL

Minutes from the Meeting of the Corporate Performance Panel held on Wednesday, 7th January, 2026 at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillors Long (Chair), Bearshaw, Bhondi, Blunt, Jones, Kirk, Osborne and Ryves.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS:

Councillor Beales – Leader of the Council
Councillor Lintern – Portfolio Holder for Culture and Events
Councillor Moriarty – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing

OFFICERS:

Kate Blakemore – Chief Executive
Michelle Drewey – Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Emma Hodds – Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer
Duncan Hall – Assistant Director, Regeneration, Housing and Place
Carl Holland – Assistant Director, Finance
Honor Howell – Assistant Director, Transformation and Change
Mark Whitmore – Assistant Director, Health, Wellbeing and Public Protection
Paul Lowes – Assistant Director, Corporate Services
Siobhan Cleeve – Assistant Director, Leisure
Stuart Ashworth – Assistant Director, Environment and Planning
Debbie Ess – Senior Corporate Governance Officer

CP75

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dickinson, Sayers and Spikings.

CP76

MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CP77

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of Interest.

CP78

URGENT BUSINESS UNDER STANDING ORDER 7

There was none.

CP79

MEMBERS PRESENT PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 34

There was none.

CP80 **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE (IF ANY)**

There was none.

CP81 **CALL INS (IF ANY)**

There were no call-ins to consider.

CP82 **CABINET REPORT - QUARTER 2 - 2025/2026 -**
PERFORMANCE MONITORING

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The Senior Corporate Governance Officer presented the report and provided information on progress against the Council's Corporate Strategy and Key Performance Indicators and outlined those Indicators which had not met target.

The Chair thanked the Senior Corporate Governance Officer for the report asked the Panel to consider the Indicators which had not met target. The relevant Assistant Directors were present at the meeting to provide information on targets as required.

The Assistant Director, Regeneration, Housing and Place provided an update on the Car Parking Strategy and King's Lynn Masterplan and explained that the Car Parking Strategies for King's Lynn and Hunstanton were being progressed, and the Regeneration and Development Panel had been involved in assisting to develop Policy. In response to a question from the Chair, the Assistant Director stated that the proposals were likely to come before Members in March or April 2026.

The Vice Chair, Councillor Blunt commented that he acknowledged that it was important to align policies, but was frustrated with the delay and hoped that these Strategies would be given priority.

With regard to the Housing Needs Assessment the Assistant Director explained that there had been difficulties with the commissioned work and a failure from the organisation that had been commissioned to deliver what was needed. This work was now in the process of being retendered and a final draft was expected in the summer.

The Chair commented that he was concerned about housing delivery due to current market conditions and low land values meaning some developers wouldn't be able to deliver because of finances. He hoped that the West Winch development would not be affected by this. The

Assistant Director commented that the Council had a role to play in housing delivery and worked with a variety of land owners and house builders. The Assistant Director explained that it was important to provide a mixed economy across the board, not just strategic sites and officers were exploring options with different scale developers to understand their challenges.

The Assistant Director commented that a Housing Delivery Strategy was being produced to ensure that housing came forward and to build on the Council's success of direct delivery. The Chair commented that Council intervention to support delivery was crucial.

With regard to the amount of new homes built through the Council's housing schemes, the Assistant Director provided information on risk mitigation due to the ability to switch tenures to respond to market needs and the Council's role in housing delivery.

In response to a question regarding the financial implications of direct delivery, the Deputy Chief Executive provided detail of the capital receipts and public works board loans and advised the Panel that a report would be presented to the Member Major Projects Board on the outcomes and forecasting of the Major Housing Projects.

The Leader of the Council explained that Members would be involved in production of the Housing Delivery Strategy and would need to take a view on the way forward, with finances being a big consideration.

Councillor Ryves commented that it was the Council's duty to make up for deficits left by the private sector and providing housing should be a priority for the Council.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director and officers for their comments, which would be taken into consideration going forward.

The Chair highlighted the indicator which was not meeting target relating to property assets and income generation and asked for an update from the relevant Assistant Director. The Panel also noted that the Property Disposal Strategy would be considered by the Regeneration and Development Panel at their meeting next week, prior to consideration by Cabinet on 20th January and Council on 29th January 2026.

The Chair invited the Assistant Director, Environment and Planning for an update on the Indicators within his service area that were not meeting target. The Assistant Director provided an update on the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and informed Members that it was due to be presented to Cabinet in April, after consideration by the Climate Change Informal Working Group and Environment and Community Panel.

With regard to the cycle to work scheme, the Assistant Director explained that there was now a scheme in place through Vivup, used throughout Norfolk, with approximately take up of ten cycles. This overall target was now being reviewed as to further improvements following handover, which is why it had been identified as Amber, from Green. Enhancements to the bike sheds at Kings Court had been carried out, and there was an uptake of the keys for this facility.

The Assistant Director, Environment and Planning provided an update relating to the number of planning applications that had applied for an extension of time and explained that all Government targets had been met, and the position had significantly improved over the last two years as work had been carried out to improve processes and reduce the number of older applications.

The Chair asked if the increased demands on requirements for major applications had impacted on the extension for times, for example the need to carry out additional surveys or Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Assistant Director confirmed that this had impacted performance and made it more difficult to hit the 13 week target.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Licensing, Councillor Moriarty commented that increased complexity was an issue, but the Planning Department had prepared in advance for things such as Biodiversity Net Gain and had made many improvements to the service they delivered. He stated that it was important for the Council to retain self-imposed targets to strive to improve.

The Chair invited the Deputy Chief Executive to provide information on the indicators within her remit which had not met target.

The Deputy Chief Executive provided the Panel with information on the status of lobbying Government for a solution on Internal Drainage Board levies. She noted that whilst the target had an amber status, it should be noted that it was reliant on a decision by Government and outside of the Council's direct control. She explained that the Council was continuing to lobby the Government for a solution on levy costs, the Council had been successful in securing Government Grant and increasing it for 2025/2026, however there was indication that this funding could cease from 2027/28 without a permanent solution being in place.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed the Council that she was still strongly supporting the Special Interest Group on this issue and would be looking at and responding to grant levels going forward and would continue to lobby on how levy costs could be funded.

The Chair commented that DEFRA were also looking at Internal Drainage Boards across the Country.

With regard to changes to Internal Drainage Board funding, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that whilst there had been some additional funding available, there were other cost pressures such as issues with the Environment Agency withdrawing maintenance of some rivers, meaning that the Internal Drainage Boards had to pick up these works at additional cost.

Councillor Bearshaw urged those Councillors who sat on Internal Drainage Boards to ensure that all financial estimates were presented to the Boards so that Members who sat on Internal Drainage Board were able to consider issues.

The Chair invited the Assistant Director, Corporate Services to comment on the target relating to calls being answered by the Council Information Centre within 90 seconds. The Assistant Director explained that progress had been made since quarter one and performance was continuing to improve. He explained that there had been a reduction in staff and staff sickness levels had impacted performance, along with the increase in calls due billing cycles etc. The Assistant Director explained that the Council Information Centre was now fully resourced and had also introduced a virtual assistant 'Nova' to assist customers accessing services online.

The Chair commented that 90 seconds was tight and thanked the service area for their efforts.

Councillor Bearshaw asked if the Indicator should be reviewed in light of the introduction of the virtual assistant and the Assistant Director explained that he would review the indicator and look at other options and proposals could be brought back to the Panel in due course for consideration if required.

The Chair invited the Assistant Director, Finance to provide an update to the Panel and the Assistant Director provided information on the indicator which was not meeting target relating to the amount of Purchase Orders created retrospectively and explained that work was ongoing to raise awareness amongst staff, carry out training and impose stronger controls if needed.

The Chair invited the Assistant Director, Leisure to provide an update on participation at leisure centres and reduction of net subsidy per head. The Assistant Director explained that participation levels had been impacted by Downham Market Academy withdrawing use, resulting in a 39% loss in bookings. Work was being carried out to maximise public bookings in this area and work was continuing with Downham Market Academy.

With regard to subsidy per head, this had been impacted by essential maintenance. It was noted that efficiency savings were being continuously monitored and maintenance was being carried out in house where it was safe to do so.

RESOLVED: That the comments made by the Panel be considered by Cabinet Members and officers as required and the Corporate Performance Panel supported onward recommendation of the Performance Management Report to Cabinet.

CP83

CABINET REPORT - TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - LGR READINESS

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The Assistant Director, Transformation and Change presented the report which provided an overview of the Transformation Programme and the programme of projects to prepare the organisation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Due to the synergies between the Transformation and LGR Readiness it was proposed that the Transformation Programme be redefined to an 'LGR Readiness Programme' in order to align key programmes of work.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Beales commented that it was important to prepare for LGR, even though the outcome was not yet known, and further work would be required once the Government had decided on new structures.

The Assistant Director reassured Members that the Council was continuing to work jointly with other Norfolk Local Authorities.

The Chair commented that the priority was to ensure that services could be delivered to residents within their locality.

The Chief Executive commented that it was also crucial that Council staff were in the best position in the lead up to LGR and that the Council had the necessary policies and strategies in place for whatever came next.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet, as set out below.

Cabinet resolves:

1. To agree that the Transformation Programme is redefined as the 'LGR Readiness Programme'.
2. That the governance framework which supports the Transformation Programme continues to monitor the workstreams, key objectives and outputs from projects identified under LGR Readiness and Transformation.

3. That reporting on progress, operational readiness and any issues and risks arising will continue via the Transformation Board, Corporate Performance Panel and Cabinet.

CP84

PANEL WORK PROGRAMME, CABINET FORWARD DECISIONS LIST AND SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair commented that he would request an update on property disposals.

RESOLVED: The Panel Work Programme, Cabinet Forward Decisions List and Shareholder Committee Work Programme was noted.

CP85

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Corporate Performance Panel was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 25th February 2026 at 4.30pm in the Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 5.45 pm