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# **Corporate Business Plan**

2015-2019

## Foreword

The Corporate Strategy sets out the broad framework for the Council's work over the next four year period. Whilst the Council will face severe financial headwinds as the government seeks to rectify the nation's financial deficit, it also offers existing new opportunities to enhance the economic and social prosperity of West Norfolk.

The government's devolution agenda, focused clearly on economic growth, will be a significant factor in this regard and will be actively pursued by the Borough Council.

Our commitment to supporting measures which will assist the business community to prosper and create new, quality employment opportunities remains a top priority for the Borough Council. The new University Centre at the College of West Anglia and the King's Lynn Innovation Centre will both open for business in 2016. Taken together, the award of Enterprise Zone status for the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area in King's Lynn and the proposed Centre for Advanced Knowledge Engineering at Downham Market offer exciting new opportunities to transform the economic prosperity of West Norfolk and the skills and qualifications of our workforce.

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# Making West Norfolk a better place

**West Norfolk has a strong sense of place. This council has a track record of standing up for the needs of West Norfolk's residents and businesses. We work to drive economic growth and a prosperous future for the people that live and work here, whilst ensuring that the quality of life and natural assets of the area are preserved.**

Over the last four years we have continued to provide the essential services that local people rely on. Despite the significant funding squeeze we have faced we have made improvements wherever possible and focused resources on a core set of quality services that people need and value.

Alongside this we have worked creatively with our partners in delivering programmes of work to drive up attainment in our schools, align health and social care services, bring a higher education campus to West Norfolk, develop a business innovation centre, tackle anti-social behaviour, support vulnerable families and more. We have also stood up for local interests where the weight of public opinion demands action, such as in opposing the proposal for a mass-burn incinerator in West Norfolk and continuing to lobby for improvements to the A47 and a twice-hourly train service to Cambridge and London.

Our top priority is to secure the long-term economic future of borough. We are focused on proving the support that businesses need to start up or relocate here and successfully develop. Businesses need to attract employees with appropriate skills and housing for them to live in. This is why we are driving forward with housing growth that will help ensure local people can access housing that meets their needs. This has to be backed with improvements in road, rail, broadband and mobile infrastructure that will attract people to the area and encourage business growth.

Businesses need to be able to access and draw on a skilled labour pool to support this growth and development, in turn driving up employment and wages. We need to support this by encouraging the provision of a range of leisure, arts, shopping and sports activities that provide people with an outlet for their leisure time and disposable income. All of this helps improve the overall quality of life for those who live and work in West Norfolk.

## The challenges we face

We have delivered improvements in quality of life in West Norfolk over recent years whilst operating in an environment of reducing public sector resources. Our budget has reduced by £7.5m since 2010 and our net revenue budget is now £17.1m for 2015/16.

We have responded quickly to this, taking difficult decisions where necessary, using the resources we do have as efficiently and effectively as possible, and implementing innovative solutions to problems. We have met our budget challenges so far by

1. undertaking a programme of service and corporate reviews to reduce costs. As a result we have changed, reduced or stopped services altogether where it makes sense to do so. For example we have offered different ways to access services, shared services and management with other organisations, formed a trust to operate our leisure and arts services and made savings on contracts such as refuse and recycling.
2. generating income in more commercial services, for example by offering our CCTV and car parking operations to others, in turn reducing our 'back office' costs.
3. securing third-party income (and grants) wherever this supports our priorities for the area, including Heritage Lottery Funding for the Tuesday and Saturday Market place works and improvements to the town hall and the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Public sector funding will become ever tighter throughout the four years to 2019/20. This is the financial reality within which we continue to operate.

## Our priorities

Our priority for the way the council does business is therefore to operate within our means. We will continue to look closely at what really matters to the citizens of West Norfolk and focus our resources accordingly. Our staff have, and continue to, respond positively to these challenges and we will continue to support them to work flexibly and develop their skills in priority areas.

## Priority 1: Provide important local services within our available resources

We aim to not only provide the core services on which many of our residents and businesses depend whilst keeping council tax rises at or below inflation, but also to help maximise the total available public sector resources for the benefit of West Norfolk.

The council faces continuing pressures on its finances and has to look for ways to hold down the cost of providing services. The Spending Review announcement in November 2015, setting government budgets to 2019/20, means that local government will continue to see a reduction in funding. The council will have to actively manage the delivery of services with reduced funding.

We will transform our service channels so they are easier and more convenient for people to use. This will include self service and assisted self service options. Our model for service delivery is based on a shift towards more digitally accessible and affordable channels.

1. we will deliver our 'channel-shift' programme
2. we will continue to seek new and effective ways of working
3. we will take opportunities to generate income and draw in grant funding where it helps us achieve our priorities

## Priority 2: Drive local economic and housing growth

Sustainable economic growth is a top priority for Government and also for the Borough Council. A strong economy that is growing will generate more and better job opportunities for local people and is more likely to attract people to the area to work. These people will be looking for quality housing, education and other services.

Higher levels of skills and qualifications in the workforce drive a cycle of investment and growth within the economy. This makes the area more attractive to do business in, leads to raised aspirations within families and helps to reduce inequality. This growth will help boost spending in the area and support the provision of a wider range of services.

4. we will support new and existing businesses to help them thrive
5. we will meet our housing growth targets
6. we will support activity that helps drive up the skills levels of local people

## Priority 3: Work with our communities to ensure they remain clean and safe

West Norfolk remains a very clean and safe place to live and this is reflected in our low crime rates, low levels of litter and graffiti and the high quality of our public parks and open spaces. We take action to improve areas with low air quality or that are vulnerable to the risks of flooding and we actively tackle incidences of anti-social behaviour and work to bring vacant properties back into use.

These services are valued by our residents and it remains important that we work to maintain west Norfolk's attractive rural and urban environments.

7. we will improve recycling levels
8. we will ensure that our local streets and public open areas are clean
9. we will pro-actively address anti-social behaviour

## Priority 4: Celebrate our local heritage and culture

It is important that we understand and value West Norfolk's long and proud heritage and its rich and varied history. We build on this by actively attracting people to the area - through festivals, events, tourism and leisure.

This underpins the local economy with more visitors coming to west Norfolk and spending in the local area. Tourism is also a major part of the economy on which many local jobs are based.

10. we will deliver an annual programme of festivals and events to attract people into West Norfolk and showcase our area
11. we will support the improvement of our built heritage, drawing in third-party funding wherever possible
12. we will support leisure and tourism within the borough

## Priority 5: Stand up for local interests within our region

Part of the role of local democracy is to give voice to local concerns and ensure local needs are reflected in various decision-making processes. We work hard to ensure that west Norfolk receives its fair share of resources and that service access and quality is as good here as it is in other parts of Norfolk and the region.

It is essential we retain a strong local voice to speak on behalf of the residents and businesses of West Norfolk and represent their needs not only within Norfolk but also on regional, national and international stages.

13. we will explore devolution options for West Norfolk to help us take more

control over the services that impact on people's lives

14. we will lobby for infrastructure improvements including rural broadband and mobile coverage, road and rail improvements and coastal protection
15. we will lobby to retain the core service infrastructure – such as the hospital, appropriate medical and judicial services, education and others - that reflects the needs of local people and the importance of west Norfolk in the sub-region

### Priority 6: Work with our partners on important services for the borough

We will work closely with our partners across West Norfolk, recognising that public money is becoming increasingly tight and that we must work together to get maximum value from it. We have to marshal our collective resources wherever possible to tackle common issues and make sure that we don't simply pass costs from one organisation to another.

In particular we recognise that preventing problems is less expensive than fixing them after they arise. Helping people stay safe in their own homes as they get older rather than ending up in hospital, or helping people into work rather than being unemployed are all better outcomes for local people as well as saving money for the public purse.

16. we will continue to support improvements in the educational attainment of our young people
17. we will work closely with partners in health and adult services to improve services for older people
18. we will support 'early help' initiatives aimed at preventing problems from arising in the first place

## Achieving our priorities

In working towards these priorities we must operate in an efficient way, involve local people and develop trust amongst our partners, businesses and residents.

Each priority will be accompanied by a series of agreed actions which will set out how they will be achieved. Progress towards the priorities will be assessed through a quarterly monitoring report which will be presented to the Resources and Performance Panel. This report will consider both the evidence to demonstrate progress and, where appropriate, measures of success and/or performance.

These priorities will also underpin the development of annual Directorate Plans, which outline the high priority objectives and cross cutting issues led by each Executive Director, and Service Plans which contain the key annual objectives for each service, as progressed by Service Managers. Service Plans will be used as the basis for determining annual performance targets for employees, through the Council's performance management scheme, thus ensuring that all employees are focussed on activities which support the delivery of the Corporate Business Plan.

# Our Priorities, summarised

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15. we will lobby to retain the core service infrastructure – such as the hospital, RAF Marham and dentists - that reflects the needs of local people and the importance of west Norfolk in the sub-region

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