POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Audit Committee		
DATE:	16 November 2026		
TITLE:	Annual Update on the Activity of the Shareholder Committee		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Scrutiny		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Cllr Alistair Beales - Leader		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Charlotte Marriott - Corporate Governance Manager		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	*No*

Shareholder Committee

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
This report provides the Audit Committee with an update on the work undertaken by the Shareholder Committee since September 2024 and highlights the governance, performance monitoring and assurance activities undertaken on behalf of the Council as sole shareholder of its wholly-owned companies.
KEY ISSUES:
The Audit Committee is invited to note the work undertaken by the Shareholder Committee
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
The Audit Committee is invited to note the work undertaken by the Shareholder Committee
RECOMMENDATIONS:
Audit Committee is recommended to: 1. Note the work undertaken by the Shareholder Committee since September 2024. 2. Note the strengthening of shareholder oversight arrangements through the development of company KPI frameworks.
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
The Audit Committee is invited to note the work undertaken by the Shareholder Committee

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

1.1. The Shareholder Committee acts on behalf of the Borough Council as shareholder of its wholly-owned companies. The Committee's primary role is to protect the Council's interests as shareholder by:

- Approving company business plans.
- Monitoring delivery against approved business plans.
- Reviewing company performance.
- Considering major financial and governance matters.
- Ensuring company activities remain aligned with the Council's corporate priorities.
- Holding company boards to account for performance and delivery.

1.2 During the period under review, the Committee's oversight primarily related to:

- West Norfolk Housing Company (WNHC)
- West Norfolk Property Limited (WNPL).

1.3 Committee meetings were held on:

- 11 September 2024
- 26 November 2024
- 18 February 2025
- 15 April 2025
- 4 August 2025
- 30 October 2025
- 18 March 2026
- 23 July 2026

2. Monitoring Report

Summary of Committee Activity

2.1 Throughout this period, the Committee has continued to exercise active shareholder oversight through regular reviews of company performance, business planning and governance matters.

2.2 The Committee has maintained a programme of:

- Performance monitoring
- Business plan review and approval
- Review of financial and investment matters
- Engagement with company directors and senior officers
- Consideration of governance arrangements and accountability mechanisms

2.3 The most significant theme emerging from the Committee's work over this period has been a strengthened focus on measuring company performance and ensuring delivery against agreed objectives.

2.4 During this period, the Committee has fulfilled one of its core responsibilities by reviewing and approving business planning arrangements for the Council's companies.

2.4.1 The Committee received reports setting out performance against existing business plans for both WNHC and WNPL. The Committee reviewed

delivery against the 2024/25 business plan and considered the extent to which commitments contained within approved business plans had been achieved.

2.4.2 The Committee subsequently approved updated delivery plans for 2025/26 for both companies.

2.5 Following a review of company performance reports, the Committee agreed that formal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be developed by the Board of Directors for each company to strengthen accountability and improve performance monitoring arrangements.

2.6 On 18 March 2026, the Committee received Annual Assurance Reports for both WNHC and WNPL. The reports provided assurance regarding:

- Delivery against business plans
- Governance compliance
- Financial performance
- Strategic direction
- Emerging risks and opportunities

2.7 At the meeting held on 23 July 2026, Members undertook the annual review of the Committee's Terms of Reference and approved revisions for recommendation to Cabinet. The Committee also agreed that the Terms of Reference should continue to be reviewed annually. This review indicates a commitment to:

- Continuous improvement
- Clear accountability
- Effective shareholder decision making
- Alignment with governance best practice

2.8 Additionally, discussions recorded within the July 2026 minutes highlighted Member requests for:

- A clearer governance map
- Greater clarity regarding decision-making responsibilities
- Improved communication regarding company activities
- Better information sharing with the wider membership

Alive West Norfolk

2.9 An important piece of governance work undertaken during the period related to the winding up of Alive West Norfolk.

2.10 In March 2026 the Committee considered changes to Board membership required to support the company's governance arrangements during the winding-up process.

2.11 Subsequently, in July 2026, the Committee received a status report and noted progress towards the satisfactory winding up of the company.

3. Issues for the Panel to Consider

3.1 The Audit Committee is invited to note the work undertaken by the Shareholder Committee

4. Corporate Priorities

Promote Growth and Prosperity to Benefit West Norfolk	The Shareholder Committee's oversight of West Norfolk Housing Company and West Norfolk Property Limited directly contributes to this objective through: • Scrutiny and approval of company business plans focused on housing delivery and regeneration activity. • Monitoring delivery of housing schemes that provide additional homes for residents. • Consideration of funding opportunities through government housing programmes and Homes England. • Review of financial arrangements that enable company-led investment and development activity.
Support Our Communities	The work of the housing companies, and the Shareholder Committee's oversight of them, contributes to these objectives by: • Supporting the delivery of affordable and private rented housing. • Monitoring projects aimed at increasing housing options for residents. • Considering opportunities to access grant funding to increase affordable housing provision. • Reviewing delivery against business plans designed to meet identified housing needs.
Efficient and Effective Delivery of Services	The Corporate Strategy commits the Council to promoting good governance, sustainable financial planning and effective stewardship of public resources. During the reporting period the Committee has supported this priority through: • Reviewing company performance against approved business plans. • Introducing annual assurance reporting for council-owned companies. • Strengthening performance management through the development of shareholder KPIs. • Scrutinising company financial performance and audited accounts. • Reviewing loan agreements and financial arrangements. • Undertaking an annual review of the Committee's Terms of Reference. • Overseeing governance matters associated with the winding up of Alive West Norfolk.
Protect Our Environment	Committee's oversight of housing and property development activity provides an opportunity to support the Council's environmental objectives through future business planning and investment decisions

4.1 Throughout the period the Committee explored opportunities to maximise the contribution of company activity to the Council's housing objectives.

4.2 Minutes from both October 2025 and March 2026 show discussion of:

- Affordable housing delivery
- Homes England funding opportunities
- Government investment programmes
- Potential low-cost lending arrangements
- Future growth opportunities for the housing companies

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The Committee has demonstrated increasing focus on understanding the financial performance of its companies.

5.2 At its meeting on 30 October 2025, Members considered a detailed report on the financial performance of WNHC during 2024/25. Discussion covered:

- Asset valuation methodologies
- Property revaluation cycles
- Grant funding arrangements
- Temporary accommodation schemes
- Future investment opportunities through Government housing programmes

5.3 The Committee has also undertaken oversight of financial matters impacting the Council's companies. At its August 2025 meeting, the Committee considered proposals relating to loan agreements supporting company activities and reviewed the process for agreeing drawdown arrangements. Members considered the principles underpinning future loan facilities and made recommendations to those officers with delegated authority to finalise arrangements

5.4 This financial scrutiny continued at the meeting held on 23 July 2026, when Members reviewed audited financial performance information relating to WNPL

5.5 The Committee's discussions demonstrate a growing focus on understanding not only operational delivery but also longer-term financial sustainability and exposure to risk

6. Any other Implications/Risks

Strategic Risk

6.1 Council-owned companies are established to support the delivery of corporate objectives, particularly in relation to housing delivery, asset management and regeneration. Failure by the companies to deliver approved business plans could impact the achievement of Council priorities and outcomes for residents.

The Committee has mitigated this risk through:

- Regular review of business plan delivery.
- Approval of annual business plans.
- Challenge of company performance.
- Consideration of future growth opportunities and delivery capacity.

Financial Risk

6.3 The Council has invested significant resources in its companies through loans, assets and officer support. There is therefore an inherent risk relating to:

- Company financial viability
- Loan recovery
- Cash-flow management
- Market conditions affecting property and housing sectors
- Future borrowing and investment decisions

6.4 The Committee has provided oversight of these matters through consideration of company financial performance, review of loan agreement proposals and scrutiny of audited financial information.

6.5 The Committee's discussions on property valuations, grant funding opportunities, borrowing arrangements and business model sustainability demonstrate proactive management of shareholder financial risk.

Governance Risk

6.6 A key governance risk for local authority-owned companies is the potential for unclear accountability, ineffective shareholder challenge or conflicts of interest between board and shareholder roles.

6.7 During the period under review, the Committee has taken steps to strengthen governance arrangements through:

- Annual review of its Terms of Reference.
- Development of assurance reporting.
- Formal consideration of governance matters.
- Appropriate management of board member participation and conflicts of interest.
- Requests for clearer governance mapping and accountability structures.

Compliance and Regulatory Risk

6.8 The housing and property sectors continue to experience significant regulatory and legislative change. The Committee has received updates regarding emerging policy changes, funding regimes and sector developments, including consideration of the implications of housing reform and funding opportunities.

6.9 Regular assurance reporting provides an additional mechanism through which compliance, governance and business plan delivery can be assessed by the shareholder.

7. Equal Opportunity Considerations

7.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report, which is presented to provide assurance to the Audit Committee on the governance and oversight activity undertaken by the Shareholder Committee.

7.2 The Committee's oversight of the Council's wholly-owned companies contributes indirectly to the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 through its scrutiny of housing delivery, business planning and governance arrangements

- The work of West Norfolk Housing Company supports the provision of housing that may benefit individuals and groups with protected characteristics, including older people, disabled residents and those experiencing financial hardship.
- Through oversight of housing delivery and affordable housing opportunities, the Committee supports the Council's Corporate Strategy objective of ensuring equal access to housing and opportunities within local communities.
- The Committee's focus on governance, transparency and accountability supports fair and equitable decision-making in accordance with the Council's commitment to good governance and inclusive service delivery.

7.3 The Committee has not, during the reporting period, considered any decisions that would require a specific Equality Impact Assessment. Where future company

activities, developments or investment decisions have the potential to affect particular groups disproportionately, it would be expected that appropriate equality considerations and assessments are undertaken as part of the relevant decision-making process.

8. Environmental Considerations

8.1 Whilst environmental matters have not been a primary focus of the Shareholder Committee's work during the reporting period, the Committee's oversight of housing and property development activity provides an opportunity to support the Council's environmental objectives through future business planning and investment decisions.

8.2 As company business plans evolve, the shareholder role provides a mechanism to ensure that housing delivery, asset management and development activity take account of environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and wider climate objectives where appropriate.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Over the reporting period, the Shareholder Committee has evolved from a primarily performance-monitoring body into a more mature shareholder assurance function. Through the introduction of annual assurance reporting, strengthened financial oversight, development of KPI expectations, review of governance arrangements and oversight of company restructuring and winding-up activities, the Committee has made a positive contribution to the Council's overall governance framework.

9.2 The Committee's work provides increasing assurance that the Council's interests as shareholder are being actively protected, that company activities remain aligned with corporate priorities, and that appropriate governance mechanisms are in place to oversee public investment in council-owned companies.

11. Background Papers

- 23 Jul 2026 2.00 pm - Agenda, Decisions, Draft Minutes
- 18 Mar 2026 4.00 pm - Agenda, Decisions, Draft Minutes
- 30 Oct 2025 9.30 am - Agenda, Decisions, Minutes
- 4 Aug 2025 10.00 am - Agenda, Decisions, Minutes
- 19 May 2025 10.30 am - POSTPONED
- 15 Apr 2025 4.00 pm - Agenda, Decisions, Minutes
- 18 Feb 2025 3.00 pm - Agenda, Decisions, Minutes
- 26 Nov 2024 11.00 am - Agenda, Decisions, Minutes
- 11 Sep 2024 10.00 am - Agenda, Decisions, Minutes