

Greater Norwich Growth Board Meeting Minutes

Date: 6 October 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Present

Name	Organisation	Role
Cllr John Fuller	South Norfolk Council	Chairman
Cllr Shaun Vincent	Broadland District Council	Board Member
Cllr Alan Waters	Norwich City Council	Board Member
Cllr Andrew Proctor	Norfolk County Council	Vice Chairman
CJ Green	New Anglia LEP	Board Member
Phil Courtier	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Officer
Trevor Holden	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Officer
Claire White	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Officer
Matt Tracey	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Graham Nelson	Norwich City Council	Officer
Stephen Evans	Norwich City Council	Officer

In Attendance:

Name	Organisation	Job Title
Damian Adams	FMG Consulting Ltd	Director
Grace Burke	Greater Norwich Growth Board	Greater Norwich Project Team Leader
Sara Burston	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Project Co-ordinator Broadland Country Park
Samantha Fletcher	Norfolk County Council	Assistant Director Education Strategy and Infrastructure,

Simon Hamilton	Active Norfolk	Sport England Extended Workforce and Strategic Director
Isabel Horner	Norfolk County Council	Capital Sufficiency Delivery Manager

1.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
2.	<p>APOLOGIES</p> <p>Apologies were received on behalf of Tom McCabe, Vince Muspratt and Chris Starkie.</p>
3.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2022, were agreed as a correct record, save for the following amendment:</p> <p>Cllr Shaun Vincent was deleted from the list of those in attendance.</p>
4.	<p>INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT FUND PROJECT SHOWCASE: BROADLAND COUNTRY PARK</p> <p>The Board received a presentation on Broadland Country Park (appended at Appendix 1 to these minutes) from Sarah Burston, the Project Co-ordinator Broadland Country Park.</p> <p>The Park had been established following the purchase of Houghen Plantation in December 2019, which was comprised of 57 hectares of mixed woodland heath and fen to the north west of Norwich. In addition 20 hectares of adjacent woodland leased by Broadland District Council had been used to make up what was now Broadland Country Park. The support of the Greater Norwich Growth Board had been essential to the completion of this accessible, high quality green space.</p> <p>Following the appointment of the Project Co-ordinator in August 2020, the park had been named and two circular routes were signposted and established.</p> <p>Baseline data for the use of the park since November 2021 had been collected by the installation of people counters at access points, which showed that on average the Park received 1,000 visits per week.</p>

Consultants had also been commissioned to conduct an in-person survey during the summer of 2022. This had shown that dog walking was the main activity (76 percent), 65 percent of visitors came by car or van and 59 percent stayed for an average of 30 minutes to an hour. The majority of visitors (88 percent) were from within the Broadland District.

The main investment in the Park so far had been on hard infrastructure, (two car parks, picnic benches and the resurfacing of the pink circular route). Visitor feedback from these initiatives had been very positive and much appreciated.

In May 2021 a part time Park Ranger had been appointed who had extensive conservation experience.

Events had been held at the Park at Easter and August 2022 and an event was planned for the October 2022 half-term.

To assist with conservation management, eleven Shetland cows were grazing the heathland area and improvements to the pond and work on ditches had been undertaken to help retain water and preserve habitat for wildlife.

A team of volunteers had been established to assist with conservation and had put in 2,500 hours of work since January 2022.

A Memorandum of Understanding with the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society had been agreed for a three year period. So far the society had recorded 1,600 species at the site including 743 insects and had installed 64 bird boxes and reptile refugia.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Park needed to establish a marketing strategy to better publicise it as a visitor attraction. However, this would need to be balanced against the limited parking currently available.

The Chairman stated that the success of the Country Park demonstrated the importance of investing in green infrastructure to stimulate projects. He also noted that local authorities were receiving around £185 per new dwelling since 1 April 2022 via the Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS) and that Broadland Country Park could be used as a template for future investment in green infrastructure in Greater Norwich.

The Board thanked Sarah Burston for her presentation and for the excellent work of her team at the Park.

5. GREATER NORWICH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORTS STRATEGY

The Chairman advised the meeting that Greater Norwich was one of the first bodies to develop a Strategy in accordance with Sport England's

Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance and was, therefore, in an excellent position to access funding for the projects being proposed.

Simon Hamilton introduced the Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan, which sought to ensure that sport and physical activity focused on outcomes that improved physical health and mental wellbeing, reduced inequalities, improved community cohesion, and supported economic development.

To provide some context the Board was informed that a survey conducted as part of the Strategy had found that 63 percent of children and young people in Norfolk did not achieve the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day and that 40 percent of adults did not achieve the recommended 115 minutes of physical activity per week.

The Strategy, which had been funded by £50,000 from the Greater Norwich Growth Board, matched funded with £50,000 from Sports England, aimed to maximise the opportunity to address this inactivity.

FMG Consulting had been commissioned to lead the delivery of the Strategy, which had been informed by a detailed evidence base, a targeted public consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Damian Adams from FMG Consulting took the Board through a presentation (attached at Appendix 2 to these minutes).

The Board was shown the structure and key outputs of the Strategy, as well as the mission, vision, key objectives, guiding principles and programmes and work areas.

The Chairman thanked officers for their comprehensive report and asked what opportunities were available now that the Strategy had been finalised.

In response, Damian Adams advised the Board that Sport England had not yet revised its funding to reflect its Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance, but Greater Norwich should be in the best position possible to access funding streams as soon as they were announced.

In answer to a query, it was confirmed that a greater emphasis was being placed on informal space, as it was apparent that many people could be put off exercise in a formal setting. This also underlined the importance of green infrastructure in new housing developments.

Members were also informed that implementation costs for projects had not been identified in the Action Plan, these would be considered in the next phase by the Greater Norwich Sport and Physical Activity Working Group, as the programmes set out in the Action Plan were developed.

The Chairman noted that the Action Plan set out an excellent inventory of what assets and activities were available in Greater Norwich and explored

what could be available in the future and that much of the funding for this would come from Sport England.

In response to a question regarding facilities in districts bordering Greater Norwich, it was confirmed that Sports England data that was used to inform the strategy took into account facilities in neighbouring authorities, if demand for them was evident.

In summary, the Chairman emphasised that the Community Infrastructure Levy went towards addressing the cumulative impact of growth through health and environmental outcomes, not just roads and other hard infrastructure.

It was suggested that the in-person launch event might be held at The Nest.

RESOLVED

1. To accept the Greater Norwich Physical Activity and Sports Strategy.
2. That an in-person launch event should accompany an online soft launch of the Strategy.

13. GREATER NORWICH INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN APPENDICES

The Chairman reminded the Board that at their last meeting in June, amendment to the appendices of the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan (GNIP) had been requested to more clearly set out projects, costs and their aims in order for members to focus on the schemes that were really important to take forward.

Phil Courtier advised the meeting that officers had taken on board the points made at the last meeting and had undertaken a significant amount of work to meet the requirements of the Board. This would be an evolving piece of work and would be developed further for the 2023 iteration of the GNIP. He asked the Board to note that there was a typographical error in Appendix A; the Heartsease Roundabout was in the Norwich City area, not Broadland as listed.

Grace Burke informed the meeting that Appendix A now contained all projects that provided the full information on their status and costs. All other aspirational projects were now separated in Appendix B. As part of this evolving piece of work it is intended to digitise this information for the GNIP in June 2023.

The Chairman noted that this was a greatly improved document that clearly set out the status of these important projects being taken forward. He added that it would, however, have been useful to have a column for 'project owners' so that members and the public would have a point of contact, if required.

Alan Waters commended the very thorough piece of work undertaken, which underlined that the delivery of infrastructure was the driving force for the success of the Greater Norwich partnership.

Shaun Vincent questioned why the Western Link was not listed in the appendices and also asked why some projects appeared to be missing and some were under construction with no funding agreed.

In response Grace Burke advised the meeting that the appendices showed the overarching list of infrastructure required across all thematic areas irrespective of whether we can afford to deliver them all. It's, information that is provided to the team from each authority and she conceded that the appendices need further work and that when digitised they would show clearly how and from where they were funded. It was also confirmed that the projects illustrated all funding streams, as the Community Infrastructure Levy would never be enough to fund the majority of the projects.

Matt Tracey added that many of the projects were also in the Norfolk Infrastructure Delivery Plan, so there might be an element of cross referencing that confused some of the figures in the appendices. A number of schemes were also funded through the Department for Transport. He confirmed that the points raised by Cllr Vincent would be taken away and used to inform the updated GNIP next year.

Graham Nelson pointed out that the Western Link was mentioned in the body of the GNIP report, but as there was a lack of unanimity amongst the constituent local authorities over whether the Western Link should be built, it was probably not appropriate to refer to it, apart from as a factual update, unless all were content with the principle of the scheme.

In summary, the Chairman commended the improvements made to the appendices and the aspiration for an even more comprehensive list for next June, even if there was no absolute unanimity about the projects on it.

Phil Courtier drew members' attention to page 63 of the agenda, which explained that the infrastructure projects listed were those eligible to receive Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding within the Greater Norwich area. Other projects, for example the Long Stratton bypass, would be funded by £10m ring-fenced through the City Deal and the Western Link would access funding elsewhere

RESOLVED

To accept the Draft Appendices of the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan 2022.

14. SCHOOLS' CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR GREATER NORWICH

Isabel Horner introduced the report, which requested that the Board agree that future funding allocations from the Infrastructure Investment Fund be used in whole or in part to repay Norfolk County Council's borrowing, on condition that it is used to support the delivery of schools within the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan programme schools' capital programme and that any residual funding would be used for individual projects approved by the Board.

The Board was also asked to consider whether the allocation could be uplifted to reflect inflation since 2017 to £2.5m.

Andrew Proctor advised the meeting that he supported using this funding as leverage for borrowing, rather than directly supporting capital projects.

It was confirmed that the borrowing liability would fall upon the County Council and that they would draw down upon it as and when required for the Capital Programme. If the borrowing was not required the contribution from the Greater Norwich Growth Board would be used for specific projects in the Capital Programme.

In answer to a query about the basic needs and high needs allocations within the Greater Norwich area, Isabel Horner informed the Board that this information had not been provided in the report.

It was confirmed, however, that there were considerable Basic Need contributions to large scale projects within the Greater Norwich Area. For example, the expansion of Sprowston Community Academy had received £4m in S106 contributions and £4m from Basic Need. Another major project was the Victory Academy in Costessey, which received 2m in CIL and £5m from Basic Need.

Members were informed that the Norfolk County Council Capital Programme set out clearly where the funds had been allocated and that an interim report could be provided for the Board to show exactly where basic and high needs funds had been allocated in the Greater Norwich area, if required.

Whilst Basic Need funding had focused mainly on the Greater Norwich area, high needs was spread across the county more widely to take into account transport costs and travel time.

The Board was also informed that the Basic Need allocation was received through a settlement from the Treasury via the Department of Education that was based on demography and school forecasts, which could go up or down and did not allow assumptions to be made about allocation requirements beyond five years.

In respect of new schools coming forward, the Board was informed that a fairly accurate forecast could be made for the next five years, but that it was much more difficult to predict beyond this period.

Trevor Holden emphasised the importance of the Annex 2 of the report in identifying that the borrowing was being used against schools in the Greater Norwich area and that there was an appropriate proportion of high needs allocation coming in, so that the ability to borrow was not effectively releasing high needs allocation for the rest of the county.

It was confirmed that this would be made clear in future reports.

In respect of future projects, it was confirmed that it was likely that a new school would come forward as part of the East Norwich masterplan. Members were also informed that Norwich had a number of Free Schools that had come forward to meet need in a different way to that being provided through local authorities.

The Board was also asked to note the expansion at Bowthorpe schools in Annex 2 was incorrectly listed as being in Broadland, instead of Norwich.

The Board decided that they were content to support recommendations 1 and 2 at this stage, but would wait until the GNGB full financial figures were available at the next meeting to determine if there should be any uplift in the allocation.

RESOLVED

1. To agree for future funding allocations from the Infrastructure Investment Fund to be used in whole or in part to repay Norfolk County Council's borrowing, on condition that it is used to support the delivery of schools within the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Plan programme schools' capital programme.
2. To agree for future IIF allocations to be committed to the Greater Norwich schools' capital programme, instead of to individual projects. On condition that annual programme delivery and budget updates are reported to the GNGB.

15. MATCH FUNDING LEVELLING UP FUND PROJECTS

Phil Courtier introduced the report, which sought the Board's support for match funding two schemes; Sloughbottom Park Regeneration and the Guildhall Hill and Exchange Street project, which had been submitted to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). These were being brought for consideration in advance of the standard process to formalising the Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan, because of the need to secure match funding in a timely manner, as a delay could impact on the LUF application.

The Sloughbottom Park scheme would bring significant recreational enhancements including a 3G pitch and a multi-purpose pavilion. The total cost of the scheme would be over £8.5m and the Board was being asked for match funding of £850,000.

The Guildhall Hill and Exchange Street scheme would bring significant enhancements to the public space by improving pedestrian and cycle flows and the relocation of the taxi rank. The project would cost £5.89m and the Board was asked for a contribution of £2,771,548.

If agreed, both schemes would come back to the Board as part of the Annual Growth Plan in due course.

The Chairman noted the importance of providing certainty for these schemes and that the principle of supporting them was not in question. He did, however, have some concerns regarding the relocation of the taxi rank at Guildhall Hill on grounds of public safety and suggested that this could be looked at in more detail when it was brought back to the Board for final determination.

It was confirmed that there were sufficient funds to pre-commit to these projects, as CIL receipts were currently in the region of £20m.

RESOLVED

1. To recommend Sloughbottom Park Regeneration and Guildhall Hill and Exchange Street projects to be included in the AGP 2023/24, to support Norwich City Council's Levelling Up Fund application bid.
2. To pre-commit £850,000 of IIF to Sloughbottom Park Regeneration and £2,771,548 to Guildhall Hill and Exchange Street within the Greater Norwich Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2023-2028 and to recommend their approval to the three partner district cabinets in Jan/Feb 2023.

16. CITY DEAL BORROWING

Phil Courtier introduced the report by reminding the Board that the original City Deal allocation for the Long Stratton bypass had been £10m. Until recently it had been considered that not all of this funding would be needed and a requirement of £6.733m had been forecast and agreed by all partners in March 2022. However, recent inflationary pressures now meant that it was likely that the full £10m would be required for the project and, therefore, the Board were requested to recommend that their respective councils agree to the signing of a deed of variation to complete the legal agreement.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the £10m from the City Deal was separate from the £20m that could be used as a loan facility that had been recently discussed by the Board.

It was also noted that there would remain a funding gap of around £9m for the Long Stratton bypass, over and above the increase in the City Deal funding and the developer contribution of £4.5m.

RESOLVED

1. To recommend their District Cabinet and Full Councils agree the signing of this deed of variation to the agreement entitled, Partner Draw down and Borrowing Authorisations that was originally signed by all partners on 21st October 2015. The deed of variation is included as Appendix A.
2. The GNGB agree for the City Deal borrowing to support the delivery of Long Stratton Bypass to be increased to £10m, the full amount allocated within the City Deal Document which all partners signed with Government in December 2013. The project change request is included as Appendix B.

3. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting to be held on Thursday 15 December at 2.00pm, would be held in person at Norfolk County Council.

The meeting closed at 3.58 pm.