

Minutes of the Greater Norwich Growth Board

Date: Thursday 30 November 2023

Time: 11am

Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DH

Present:

Name	Organisation	Role
Phil Courtier	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Officer
Cllr John Fuller	South Norfolk Council	Board Member
Cllr Sue Holland	Broadland District Council	Vice-Chair
Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Norfolk County Council	Chair
Graham Nelson	Norwich City Council	Officer
Chris Starkie	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Cllr Mike Stonard	Norwich City Council	Board Member

In Attendance:

Name	Organisation	Job Title
Hollie Adams	Norfolk County Council	Committee Officer
Mike Burrell	Norfolk County Council	GNLP Policy Planner
Grace Burke	Norfolk County Council	Project Team Leader
Thomas Cushan	Norfolk County Council	Greater Norwich Project Officer
Samantha Fletcher	Norfolk County Council	Assistant Director of Education, Strategy and Infrastructure
Isabel Horner	Norfolk County Council	Capital Sufficiency Delivery Manager
Ellie Leeper	Norfolk County Council	Greater Norwich Project Officer
Ruth Oyeniya	Norfolk County Council	Greater Norwich Senior Project Officer
Laine Tisdall	Norfolk County Council	Committee Officer
Matt Tracey	Norfolk County Council	Sustainability, Infrastructure and Development Group Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 There were no apologies received.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 September 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. Schools' Capital Programme for Greater Norwich

4.1 The Board received the annexed report (4).

4.2 Officers introduced the report to the Board, which detailed the progress and budget updates on the schemes within the Greater Norwich Growth Area, expenditure of the income to date, and proposals for the coming year for GNGB support.

4.3 There had been an increase in the annual contribution from the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Investment Fund to £2.5m, which would ensure Norfolk County Council met its statutory duty to ensure sufficient places for children of school age. Officers remarked that in the current economic climate, multiple public bodies were attempting to avoid the implications of borrowing, and therefore it was proposed that Norfolk County Council would not use this facility for the immediate future.

4.4 Officers gave an update to Board Members relating to the progress of current and future schemes, with a short presentation of images shown to the Board.

- Cringleford New Primary – considerable progress had been made and the project was approximately 50% through the build process. The new school should open in September 2024.
- Hethersett Academy – work had recently commenced on site.
- Blofield Primary School relocation and expansion – work was scheduled to commence in early December.
- Wymondham High Academy – The next stage of expansion work was to be considered soon.
- Rackheath New High – This project was being considered.
- Silfield New Primary – Officers confirmed this project was not a recipient of funding from the Infrastructure Fund, as it had received considerable Section 106 contributions and government grants from Norfolk County Council.

4.5 Officers commented on school demographics in Norfolk. There had been a reduction in the school age population in Norfolk, which began at Reception age. This continued a trend identified in the data last year. There were still areas in Norfolk where numbers of primary pupils remained buoyant, which could be related to new house developments. Numbers of secondary school pupils remained high and was expected to last several more years at the current levels. Officers stressed that despite noticeable demographic

change in Norfolk, new primary schools were still a key infrastructure requirement for new developments and that striking a balance between school places and new infrastructure was an aim for Norfolk County Council

4.6 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The Chair stated it was encouraging that investment was being made into educational infrastructure in Norfolk to ensure sufficient places were available. Significant growth was expected in Norfolk over the next few years and it was important to ensure children were taught in buildings fit for purpose. The Chair remarked that issues relating to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) had not had much of an impact in Norfolk compared to the national picture.
- The Chair expressed hopes that investment in the education sector would in time reverse the demographic change seen in Norfolk, with the attraction and retention of young people towards high-paying jobs in the county.

4.6 **RESOLVED**

The Greater Norwich Growth Board:

1. Unanimously **recommended** the approval of the expenditure of £2.5m education contribution from the Infrastructure Investment Fund for 2024/25 towards Wymondham High Academy expansion for a second year.
2. **Considered** and **commented** on the Greater Norwich Schools' capital programme.

5. **Draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2024 - 2029**

5.1 The Board received the annexed report (5).

5.2 Officers introduced the report to the Board, which presented the Draft Greater Norwich Joint Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2024-29 for collective review, ahead of the Plan being considered by individual partnership Cabinets and Councils in December 2023/January 2024.

5.3 Officers stated that the report recommended £650,000 in Match Funding be allocated to The Nest development in Horsford. Match Funding would be in place until the end of March 2025, which would enable The Nest time to secure a significant tranche of funding for its next stage.

5.4 The report proposed the signing of a deed of variation to the agreement entitled, 'Partner Draw down and Borrowing Authorisations' that was originally signed by all partners on 21st October 2015. This was required to progress the establishment of the already agreed City Deal Borrowing Loans Fund, which was the draw down of £20m of borrowing, to provide a loan facility for projects in the Greater Norwich area.

5.5 Officers gave an overview of the five year plan to the Board. Approximately £1m was to be allocated to three new projects in the area, on top of the £2.5m allocated towards educational facilities. The Infrastructure Investment Fund was expected to remain

healthy over the lifetime of the plan, although income was expected to decline over the next couple of years.

5.6 A short demonstration of a new dashboard was shown to Board Members. Officers had investigated ways to improve the presentation of financial information relating to the five-year plan. The dashboard utilised interactive bar charts, pie charts and gauges to display financial information. Projects which had received Match Funding could also be scrutinised, along with information relating to pre-agreed loans. Officers stated the dashboard would demonstrate proven financial planning within the Infrastructure Investment Fund.

5.7 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Board Members asked how the dashboard could be accessed. Officers confirmed the dashboard was included within the papers and would be launched online forthwith.
- Board Members thanked officers for the deployment of the dashboard, which would enable hard financial data to be displayed in an accessible way. The profile of the Investment Plan could be easily discerned from the data available, which would aid future decision making.
- The Chair queried the decline in income into the Infrastructure Investment Fund and asked whether this was linked to recent legislation relating to Nutrient Neutrality. Officers confirmed this was the case. It was unknown at present how quickly income would recover, and solutions were being considered by officers. There had been a 50% drop in income during 23/24, with a further 50% drop forecasted for 24/25. Approximately £3m was expected to enter the fund in 24/25.

5.4 **RESOLVED**

The Greater Norwich Growth Board:

1. **Used** their delegated authority to allocate £650,000 Match Funding towards Phase 3 of development at The Nest, subject to the applicant meeting the following conditions:
 - The project could not draw down any IIF funding until all remaining match funding was secured, and onsite delivery of the project began. Until that point, the project would progress towards delivery at its own risk.
 - The project had until 31 March 2025 to secure all remaining match funding and for an updated delivery programme to be agreed by the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Delivery Board.
2. Unanimously **recommended** the signing of a deed of variation to the agreement entitled, Partner Draw down and Borrowing Authorisations' that was originally signed by all partners on 21st October 2015. This was required to progress the establishment of the already agreed City Deal Borrowing Loans Fund.
3. Unanimously **approved** the draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2024-29 which included the proposed 2024/25 Annual Growth Programme, and for it

to be **recommended** to each of the three partner district Cabinets and Councils to be agreed.

5a. Match funding confirmed for Sloughbottom Park Regeneration Project

- 5a.1. The Board received the annexed report (5a).
- 5a.2. Officers introduced the report to the Board, which announced that on Monday 20th November, Norwich City Council received confirmation that Sloughbottom Park Regeneration project had provisionally been awarded £7,583,515 of funding from round three of Government's Levelling Up Fund. This was to be matched by £850,000 which was committed to the project from the Greater Norwich Infrastructure Investment Fund in March 2023. This meant the project was now able to progress towards delivery and no longer needed to withdraw from the Greater Norwich Growth Programme
- 5a.3 Officers commented that the overall project was valued at £9.2m in summer 2022. Due to inflationary pressures, it was possible to scale back certain aspects of Sloughbottom Park if required. The project was sustainable. The government had confirmed they were open to increase their level of funding if a case could be made.
- 5a.4 Officers stated Sloughbottom Park would make a significant improvement to the health and wellbeing of a deprived community in Norwich. Sloughbottom Park was located next to Sweet Briar Marshes, which had recently been purchased by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) to create the first urban nature reserve in Norfolk. It was hoped that the project would offer a range of volunteering, upskilling and conservation activities to improve employment opportunities in this area of Norwich. Officers confirmed there were ongoing discussions with the NWT and representatives aimed to attend the next meeting of the Greater Norwich Growth Board to introduce the plans for the Sweet Briar Marshes project, outlining the benefits for the community particularly in the Hellesdon area.
- 5a.5 The following point was discussed and noted:
- Board Members affirmed their support for the project, as it supported both rural and urban needs in the area.

5a.6 RESOLVED

The Greater Norwich Growth Board:

1. Unanimously **confirmed** that GP89 Sloughbottom Park Regeneration Project would remain within the Greater Norwich Growth Programme, with £850,000 committed to it from the Infrastructure Investment Fund.
2. **Instructed** the required changes be made to the draft Five Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 24-29, reinstating GP89 Sloughbottom Park Regeneration Project within the programme, ahead of the Plan progressing to each District Cabinet and Council for a decision.

6. Withdrawal of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership from the Board

- 6.1 The Board received the annexed report (6).
- 6.2 Officers introduced the report to the board, which affirmed that in August 2023, the Government announced that they would no longer sponsor or fund Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). These functions were now expected to be delivered by upper tier local authorities. As a result, in April 2024, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership would be integrated into Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, and arrangements were required to be agreed to enable the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to withdraw from the Greater Norwich Growth Board.

6.3 **RESOLVED**

The Greater Norwich Growth Board:

- Unanimously **agreed** for the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to be removed from their signed Joint Working Agreement and Constitution from the 1 April 2024
- Unanimously **agreed** for the required changes to be made to all Greater Norwich process documents and the GNGB website to reflect the withdrawal of the New Anglia LEP from the Board membership.

7. **Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 19 March 2024 at 14:00, Council Chamber, County Hall, Norwich

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 11:43