

Minutes of the Greater Norwich Growth Board

Date: Tuesday 11 March 2025

Time: 10:00am

Venue: The Upper Yare Room, Horizon Centre, Peachman Way, Norwich, NR7 0WF

Present:

Name	Organisation	Role
Cllr Sue Holland (Chair)	Broadland District Council	Board Member
Cllr Mike Stonard (Vice Chair)	Norwich City Council	Board Member
Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Norfolk County Council	Board Member
Cllr Graham Minshull	South Norfolk Council	Board Member

In Attendance:

Wendy Brooks	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Grace Burke	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Ben Burgess	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Officer
Phil Courtier	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Officer
Thomas Cushan	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Georgie Day	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Matthew Elvin	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Isabel Horner	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Ellie Leeper	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Ruth Oyenyi	Norfolk County Council	Officer
Helen Sibley	South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council	Officer
Matt Tracey	Norfolk County Council	Officer

1. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr D Elmer, his substitute was Cllr G Minshull.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4. PROJECT SHOWCASE: VENTA ICENORUM

The Board received a presentation from Helen Sibley, Green Infrastructure Officer, Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils, on the improvements made to the Venta Icenorum site.

The site, also known as the Caistor Roman Town, had received a grant of £153,000 from the Greater Norwich Growth Board which had funded an extension to the car park.

There had been a number of issues with parking at the site which had been struggling to cope with the number of visitors. The car park would often be full, and visitors would resort to parking on the nearby grass verges, which had led to complaints being raised by the Police. To mitigate this problem, an additional car park had been built, adjacent to the existing one, which had doubled the parking capacity. A second wooden entry point to the site had also been created which mirrored the existing entryway and included an information board and secure gates. Bollards had been positioned along the grass verges to deter parking.

Due to the rural location of the site, sustainable transport options were considered, but owing to the lack of frequent buses and the site not being suitable to walk to, these were not considered to be viable options. To facilitate low carbon options, three electric vehicle charging points had been installed as well as bicycle stands.

Phase two of the project would be the creation of a small visitor centre and additional permissive footpaths. St Mary's Church, which was within the site, had been experiencing declining parishioner numbers so the Norfolk Archaeology Trust had worked with the Norwich Diocese to keep use of the Church as a small visitor centre. It would continue to be used to meet the needs of the local community with occasional funerals and christenings taking place.

Cllr M Stonard said that he was pleased to hear the plans for the church to be used as a visitor centre, as well as the overall improvements to the site.

Cllr K Mason Billig commented that there were plans for solar farms to be installed in the vicinity of the nearby Boudica Way, and she hoped that developers would take account of the area and endeavor to ensure that these did not impact on the beauty of the Boudica Way.

The Chair thanked officers for their work on such an important site.

5. EDUCATION DELIVERY REPORT – CRINGLEFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Isabel Horner, Head of Schools Infrastructure Service, Norfolk County Council, presented the case study on Cringleford Primary School which showed the difference that funding from the Greater Norwich Growth Board was having to help ensure availability of sufficient school places in the Greater Norwich Area.

Cringleford was a popular area with families and as such, was seeing a growing population. The village had an existing primary school and a nursery which had been at capacity for a number of years. There was a need for sustainable school places, meaning that pupils could walk or cycle to school, and the provision of the new 420 place school would mean that local children could attend a primary school in their own village.

The total cost of the project was £10.43m which was £0.7m under budget. The underspend was due to a lower tender price and unspent contingency budgets.

The building design was based on Government guidance with carbon zero principles such as air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels being included. It had been handed over to the Inspiration Trust in May 2024 and had opened to 30 reception aged children in September 2024. New schools were grown from reception classes upwards and year one classes would be added in September 2025.

In response to a question about catchment areas, Isabel Horner explained that each school would publish admissions figures for the year and would have an admissions policy which outlined priorities for placement. Usually, if there were sufficient places for local children, those on the oversubscribed list would be offered remaining places. By adding the provision of the new schools, this would help children from Cringleford Village to be allocated local school places.

The Board welcomed the new school provision and agreed that it was important that children had the opportunity to attend a local school.

6. GREATER NORWICH ANNUAL GROWTH PROGRAMME – 2025/26

Phil Courtier, Director of Place, South Norfolk and Broadland Councils, presented the report, which was the final step of the process to agree the Greater Norwich Annual Growth Programme for 2025/26. The draft programme had already been considered by each partner's own local authority and therefore the recommendation was to accept the programme.

The total financial commitment for the 14 projects outlined in the programme was approximately £5.66m and full details of each these were appended to the report.

He highlighted the interactive version of the Annual Growth Programme report.

Cllr M Stonard commented that the work to deliver new access infrastructure at Sweet Briar Marshes would be greatly appreciated by residents and the Board welcomed the investment in the new Oral Health School which would be a fantastic facility for local residents.

Cllr G Minshull referred to the two projects outlined in the programme for Diss and said that he was pleased that these had been included as there was some deprivation in that area.

The Chair added that she was looking forward to the completion of the Broadland Country Park projects.

The Board agreed that the report showed the great work that could be achieved through the partnership.

RESOLVED

To accept the Greater Norwich Annual Growth Programme 2025/26, committing £5,662,653 to 14 new projects from the Infrastructure Investment Fund.

7. GREATER NORWICH GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Wendy Brooks, the Head of Environment, Norfolk County Council, presented the final draft of the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy. The strategy had been developed with partners and stakeholders and considered by the Greater Norwich Growth Board at key milestones.

She highlighted the supporting documents to the strategy; the Executive Summary, the Delivery Plan 2025-2030 and the Story Map.

Ruth Oyenini, Greater Norwich Project Manager, Norfolk County Council, took the board through the key elements of the strategy, including the four purposes which were:

- A refreshed Green Infrastructure strategy to support the Greater Norwich Local Plan
- A vision and strategic approach to protecting, enhancing and expanding the area's Green Infrastructure network over the next 10-15 years
- Approach shaped by local stakeholder feedback from 35 public, private and third sector organisations
- A flexible framework for guiding and prioritizing investment in Green Infrastructure needed to support growth

The six objectives of the strategy were:

- Access to nature and healthy lifestyles
- Productive landscapes
- Distinctive places
- Nature recovery
- Urban greening
- Blue-green infrastructure

Delivery and monitoring of the strategy would be overseen by an experienced Green Infrastructure project team.

The board was given a demonstration of the interactive Story Map, which was an online mapping tool for exploring the area's Green Infrastructure. This could be used by delivery partners and decision makers to inform the implementation of Local Plan site allocation policies and prioritisation of projects for funding. It would also be useful for Town and Parish Councils in supporting community-led projects.

Wendy Brooks outlined the launch of the strategy, with a programme of events taking place. Once the strategy was launched, there would be a series of officer meetings with partner organisations to embed the strategy.

Cllr K Mason Billig commented that the strategy referred to a 'Climate Emergency' but not all partner councils had declared this. She would be happy to approve the strategy if it was factual.

The Chair said that Norfolk was a beautiful county, and the Green Infrastructure Strategy would allow people to access the countryside.

RESOLVED

To approve the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy

8. GREATER NORWICH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & SPORTS STRATEGY – YEAR 2 UPDATE

Grace Burke, Greater Norwich Programme Manager, Norfolk County Council, presented the report, which was a summary of the work undertaken during the year.

The strategy was one of the first across the country which was brought forward using Sport England's guidance and was the first to be delivered across boundaries. Previous strategies provided an update to the physical built facilities but this strategy has evolved to look at the mental health benefits of physical activity, as well as the physical benefits. Included was a comprehensive action plan and member's attention was drawn to the one-page summary of this at page 148 of the agenda papers.

The work of the strategy relied on a wide range of partners and Active Norfolk in particular had been heavily involved with the formulation of the document. The strategy also highlighted the breadth of the work undertaken by the Greater Norwich partners which ranged from opening services at schools to accessibility audits ensuring that facilities were available to all.

The Board noted the year 2 update to the Greater Norwich Physical Activity and Sports Strategy.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

24 June 2025 in the Mancroft Room, City Hall.

The meeting closed at 11:05am.