

Norwich: staff, elected member, stakeholder, visitor and resident perceptions

Executive Summary June 2018



Background

The Ignite research programme was commissioned by Norwich City Council to undertake a wide-ranging programme of research with key stakeholders over a period of eight months (October 2017-May 2018) to understand:

- their perceptions of the strengths and assets within the city,
- their long-term vision for the future
- the challenges facing Norwich as it moves forward.

Every effort was made to reach out and speak with a range of different people from different backgrounds, and with different relationships with the city.

Over the course of the eight months we engaged with residents from all walks of life: visitors, students, business owners, elected members, Norwich City Council staff, and a range of stakeholders from local public services and the voluntary sector.

Overview

The city of Norwich, like many others, is at a pivotal point in time. This research has found that people love living, working in and visiting the city and it is seen as a real social and cultural hub for the whole of Norfolk and East Anglia. There is something special about Norwich which brings people back and means that people who live here don't want to leave. People like the fact that Norwich is at the 'end of the line' and that you don't happen upon it by chance. It is a place you need to mean to come to.

People in Norwich care deeply about the environment and sustainability and they are keen to see the council take a leading role to ensure the city becomes truly sustainable. They value the local universities and research parks, both for the thinking, but also the diversity and change they bring and believe they need to play a strong role in the city's future development.

People are proud of Norwich's rich history and feel the city brings together the best of modern and historic. They like that it is an ancient, but forward-looking place; that's a little bit quirky and a tad

subversive and rule-breaking. People value that Norwich is a place where you can run into people you know, where you can easily access surrounding coast and countryside, and that it is a compact and walkable city with all the features of city-living, great arts and culture, restaurants and retail. All these factors mean that Norwich has a strong identity that people want to see protected and grown in the future.

Despite the ample challenges facing the city - including growing inequalities and lack of social mobility for some groups, isolation and loneliness, traffic and transport, the need to raise aspirations of young people and improve the quality of secondary and vocational education, affordable housing and quality jobs - Norwich is a place where there is considerable optimism.

Strengths and Challenges

The chart below summarises the strengths and challenges that emerged through the research which are described in more detail in the body of the report.

Strengths

- Safe
- Good place to make a life
- Friendly with a strong sense of community
- Diversity
- Events
- Arts and culture
- Retail and food scene
- Rich history but forward looking
- Parks and open spaces
- Sustainability
- Universities and research parks

Challenges

- Inequality and lack of social mobility
- Street homelessness, substance misuse
- Traffic
- Mixed, high quality, affordable housing
- Secondary and vocational education and lifelong learning
- Local jobs and economic growth
- Social isolation
- Diversity not seen as universally positive



Conclusion

People agree that Norwich is a great place to visit and live. The city offers a lot within a small area. It has a unique cityscape with a mixture of historic and modern buildings. Green and outdoors spaces are dotted all over the city and greatly appreciated. The countryside and coast are not far away, and the city is vibrant, catering to all interests with a wide range of events and activities that residents appreciate.

The city's cultural diversity has increased over the years and allowed the face of Norwich to change. From the universities, to the market stalls, the high streets to independent shops, Norwich has a unique atmosphere and quirky offerings.

But the city is facing challenges: traffic, transport, street homelessness, social inequality, isolation and loneliness, lack of affordable, social and sheltered housing. People we have spoken with care deeply about Norwich, but they are worried about how to protect and keep the rich history, green spaces and all that makes it special in the face of the inevitable growth which is coming, and which is already putting a strain on the city.

Many people want the city to stay the same, others recognise that a more proactive approach to the future is needed and that the decisions Norwich City Council makes about housing, transport infrastructure and city centre redevelopment will all play a pivotal role in shaping Norwich for 2040.

Participants in the research, and particularly among the stakeholders involved in the depth interviews and future Norwich conference, believe that Norwich isn't promoting itself enough, and that the council has a clear role in developing and promoting a vision for the city, not just the council. This vision should share its achievements and promote what makes Norwich great to the UK and the world, in order to attract more businesses, and build sustainable communities.

Recommendations

The research suggests ten areas the city may wish to consider as it develops its future vision:

1. Be more **youth-focused**. Young people need to be at the heart of your 2040 vision
2. A better and more holistic **skills and education** offer matched with the new jobs and ways of working likely to be present in 2040
3. A comprehensive, sustainable, modern and cheap **transport infrastructure**
4. Mixed **affordable housing** that enables people of different backgrounds, incomes, ages, disability to live together
5. Better and more socially conscious use of **technology**, drawing on research hubs and putting in firm foundations for tech start-ups
6. Continued sensitive **regeneration** that protects your unique history (opportunities in Anglia Square, Castle Mall and Prince of Wales road) and better use of existing assets like the football stadium.
7. Investment in Norwich as the **cultural hub** for Norfolk so that the city continues to draw people with the quality of arts, music, cultural, food, and experiential retail offer.
8. **Enable different working opportunities** including new industries, shared office space, more start-ups, flexible working from home, and faster commuting to London
9. More **collaboration** at all levels united behind a shared vision (city and county, across the region, involving rural areas, between partners, and with a clear social role for businesses)
10. Continued opportunities and events which **bring communities together** like the Lord Mayor's parade, the staying out campaign, and the fireworks.