

Report from Cllr Bill Borrett

County Council highlights for 2021/22

- 70% of Norfolk streetlights converted, or work underway to convert to LED
- 96.7% of highways inspections completed within timescale
- 99.6% of dangerous highway defects dealt with within timescales set out in the Transport Asset Management Plan
- 94% of Looked after Children (LAC) with an up-to-date Personal Education Plan
- Completed 51,000 Adult Social Care Assessments for 20,700 people.

The 2022/23 Budget

A **£464 million** net revenue budget, a **£25m increase** from last year, with increased spending across key service areas and capital programmes, along with a 2.99 per cent Council Tax rise has been agreed to enable Norfolk to build back better after the pandemic.

Adult Social Services will see an additional **£35.4m** of investment, against savings of £10.5m, **Children's Services** will receive **£23.2m** of further investment, with a **further £10m** this year for the **SEND School Programme**, with £12m against planned savings and **Community and Environmental Services** will see an additional **£11.2m**, against savings of £3.5m.

Within Community and Environmental Services there will be the **£10m pothole fund** to draw upon, **new recycling centres** across the County, **£5m on library upkeep** and extension of services and **£12m on the Better Broadband project**.

There has been substantial **Beryl Bikes and E-Scooters** uptake during the past year, with the average journey being over 3.5km (taking multiple car journeys out of the City) and multiple Local Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) plans being developed across the County (including Greater Norwich, King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Dereham).

Protecting Valued Services

Love Norfolk, Hate Litter – boost for pickers as litter can now be accepted at recycling centres

As the national Great British Spring Clean launched on 28th May 2021, there was good news for litter pickers as the county council announces that it was able to accept litter at any of Norfolk's recycling centres. From May, anyone who picked a small amount of litter in the county was (and is still able to) bring up to three bags of the waste to a recycling centre for

disposal. People looking to organise a group litter pick are still urged to contact their district council who can help provide bags, grabbers and arrange for collection of the waste collected.

£29m 'pothole prevention' work underway across Norfolk

Pavements, cycleways and roads all benefited from the county's £29m maintenance programme taking place right across Norfolk this year.

The crucial upkeep work is a key part of the £42 million budget for roads and infrastructure that was agreed in February 2021.

This year £4.5m is being spent on maintaining pavements and paths, for example a £167,000 scheme to remove the existing worn and uneven pavement surface on Kennedy Avenue in Gorleston and replace it with a new smooth asphalt surface will be getting underway in late July.

Brand new £1.9m Norwich South recycling Centre opened

Norfolk's newest recycling centre opened to the public in December.

The £1.9m recycling centre is the sister site to the new Norwich North recycling centre that opened on 22nd September. Together the two sites will provide improved recycling facilities for the growing greater Norwich area.

As the new Norwich South recycling centre opens at Harford, just off the A47/A140 junction, staff bid farewell to the old site at Ketteringham that closed yesterday.

The move to a larger site allows room for a one-way traffic system to smooth traffic flow and reduce queues, low-level bins meaning people will not have to climb steps to recycle their waste, and there is plenty of parking for cars, bicycles and vehicles with trailers.

Fire and Rescue staff presented with awards

The achievements of staff across Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service have been recognised through employee awards.

A ceremony to present the awards was cancelled due to the pandemic, so senior leaders have visited some of the recipients of the 2021 awards individually and will continue to do so when Covid-19 restrictions allow.

As well as honouring staff with long service awards, categories also included fundraiser of the year, making a difference awards and leadership accolades.

The Council won a national award for its work with the Armed Forces

Norfolk County Council has been recognised for its outstanding support of the armed forces community in Norfolk, following an announcement from the Ministry of Defence.

The local authority has been given the Gold Award, the highest honour handed out through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The award is given to organisations that employ and support those who serve in the armed forces, service leavers, veterans and their families, with the Gold Award also acknowledging the Council's partnership working through the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board.

This includes successfully addressing a significant gap in the dental service provision in the West of the County. It negotiated with the Ministry of Defence and NHS England, to ensure the opening of a new dental practice for serving and civilian families at RAF Marham and the surrounding area.

Care Services

Plan to tackle Adult Social Care's winter pressures

Plans to support Adult Social Services with the "winter pressures" have been put in to practice.

A report was heard by Norfolk County Council's Cabinet saying that Adult Social Services across the country are facing unprecedented challenges. However, here in Norfolk practical solutions are being put in place.

The report said: 'Norfolk Adult Social Services face a level of unprecedented challenge in 2021/22 as a result of the pandemic, with national and local workforce shortages, rising demand in hospitals and the community and the continued infection risk posed by COVID-19 as well as other recurring respiratory viruses such as flu.'

Adult Social Services received 20,279 calls for support between April and October this year – an increase of 9,400 over four years.

Action being taken by the Council includes:

- Expanding action to support people at home or, where appropriate, in short term residential settings
- Stepping up the council's care recruitment campaign, to tackle staff shortages
- Providing wrap-around support for care settings
- Providing assistive technology, with 100 video phones sent out to homes
- Improving capacity in the Norfolk First Response service
- Supporting mental health services, with three new step down services

Norfolk to take a step closer to new integrated approach to Health and Care

Norfolk County Council has agreed their support for new local Health and Wellbeing Partnerships, putting local communities at the heart of health and care in their area.

Under the Health and Care Bill, Integrated care systems (ICSs) are being established in all areas of the country to drive changes that are intended to lead to better, more joined-up care for the population.

Much of the activity to deliver integrated health and care and improve the population's health will happen more locally in the places where people live and work, meaning the new Health and Wellbeing Partnerships will play a key role in driving forward this activity.

Strengthening Community Resilience

A new single point of contact for flooding in Norfolk has been launched, allowing residents to report any sort of flooding quickly and efficiently

In the event of flooding residents can call 0344 800 8013 to report it. Alternatively, residents can continue to report flooding online via the Council's website. The new number gives residents a single point of contact and allows reports to be made swiftly.

Different agencies respond to different types of flooding, which has historically made reporting a flood by telephone more complicated when and where it is not possible to ascertain the source of floodwaters. The new number provides a single point of contact making the reporting of flooding quicker and easier.

Where there is a potential risk to life from flooding people should still call 999 immediately.

Flood Reserve Fund spending agreed

Norfolk's Cabinet considered the allocation of the council's £1.5m Flood Reserve Fund to support urgent works, repairs and to enable recommendations from flood investigation reports. The Reserve Fund was set up in the annual budget for 2021/22 agreed by the County Council in their budget meeting in February.

The Cabinet meeting, held on 6th September, discussed the proposed allocation of the funding, including £695k for additional highway and ditch maintenance and £365k for drainage asset improvements.

This funding will be used for work on the 285,864 metres of drainage grips and 31,037 metres of kerb drains on Norfolk's highways, as well as operations to clear some of the county's 145,305 gullies that help drain rain water.

Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance has formally adopted the Strategy

The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) has formally adopted an overall Strategy, designed to enable county wide responses to flooding across all agencies involved.

The Strategy, which lays out the NSFA's vision, objectives, approach and structure, is a major milestone in the development of the Alliance, which was founded earlier this year to bring

together all agencies and partners involved in planning for and responding to flooding in Norfolk.

£1million awarded to community groups across Norfolk

Community and voluntary organisations across Norfolk were set for a major cash boost as the recipients of the **Norfolk Social Infrastructure Fund** were announced.

Norfolk County Council has handed out £1.02 million to 25 different organisations, with grants ranging £3,400 all the way up to £250,000.

In total, the fund saw 64 applications with funding requests that totalled almost £5million. This was more than double the number of applications received last year.

Economic Development

Ground-breaking partnership to provide Covid-19 recovery support for Norfolk

Norfolk County Council and New Anglia LEP were part of an ambitious cross-border project which helped to deliver a unique package of Covid-19 recovery support for local businesses and people.

The C-CARE (Covid Channel Area Response Exchange) initiative, funded by the Interreg France (Channel) England programme which has allocated €2.2m for C-CARE in Norfolk, was set to reach businesses and people that were been hit hardest in the pandemic.

Drawing on a range of expertise from local government, enterprise and tourism in the UK and France, the project supported people at risk of exclusion from the labour market and businesses at risk of closure.

C-CARE aims to reach 4,500 people and almost 2,000 businesses through its pilot initiatives which include skills training to help individuals find new routes into employment or starting a business, and advice and grants aimed at helping companies reset their business models in response to the pandemic.

In Norfolk the project will work to support over 600 people into employment or self-employment and provide support for up to 800 businesses.

Norfolk to get faster broadband thanks to new Government funding

Hard to reach premises in Norfolk are to receive between £115m and £195m of funding as part of the Government's Project Gigabit to provide 1GB per second broadband to up to 119,000 premises. Contracts will be awarded from February 2022.

Rural homes and businesses across Norfolk and Suffolk will get next-generation gigabit broadband brought to them under a £5 billion plan to level up internet access across the UK. It means families no longer having to battle over bandwidth and will give people in rural areas

the freedom to live and work more flexibly, with the speed and reliability needed to start and run businesses.

Supporting families and young people

Vulnerable young people in Norfolk have chance to take “New Roads” with launch of dedicated support service

A new service to support some of Norfolk’s most vulnerable young people to live within families and achieve their full potential launched on 1st June 2021.

“New Roads” was set up by Norfolk County Council with significant investment to give young people access to a dedicated support team that sticks with them, understands them, and helps them to achieve and succeed.

Based out of two hubs, in Dereham and Norwich, the service provides young people with education, life coaching and speech and language therapy, as well as access to short term residential beds and foster care placements to help meet their needs.

The aim is to give young people stability, reduce risk-taking behaviour and help to avoid the need for long-term residential care, as well as longer term costs to themselves, the wider system and communities.

Free online business summer school for 16-25-year-olds in Norfolk

There are so many options to choose from when leaving school - like apprenticeships, university, work experience, getting a job...

Or how about starting a business? It may seem a daunting idea at first, but there’s lots of free help on offer.

Started in August 2021, the Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Norfolk, managed by Norfolk County Council’s Library and Information Service, ran a free online Summer School for 16-25-year-olds to help them decide whether starting their own business might be right for them.

Plans for thousands of new school places in Norfolk

More than a dozen new primary schools could be needed in Norfolk in the next decade, to cater for growing pupil numbers in areas of development.

A report to Norfolk County Council’s Cabinet highlighted the scale of school development that is likely to be needed to support Norfolk’s growing communities. It addresses both demographic changes and population growth from new housing. The report, discussed by members on 31st January, provided a snapshot of the council’s plans to ensure there are sufficient school places for Norfolk children aged four to 16.

Alongside district councils, the County Council expects to secure nearly £100m in developer contributions for the proposed new and extended schools but if all of the places are needed, a further £191m would need to be found. Some of this will be met by Community Infrastructure Levy and government grant contributions.

Inspectors praise support for children in care in Norfolk

Most children in care in Norfolk are well looked after and receive good support for their emotional and mental health and education, Ofsted inspectors have found.

A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited Norfolk County Council in October for a two-day focused visit of the council's services for children in its care.

In a letter detailing their findings, inspectors said that social workers know their children well, listen to them and help them to understand their experiences.

Ofsted's visit follows a similar visit in 2019, which looked at how the council responds to child safeguarding calls and referrals. Following that visit, inspectors described the quality of decision making as "consistently strong".

Caring for our environment

Carbon cutting commitment central to new county transport plan

A plan set to drive the county's transport policy for the next 15 years was discussed by County Councillors in August. The ambitious Local Transport Plan has at its heart the aim to support a growing economy, strengthen communities and reduce our impact on the environment.

A carbon cutting commitment is central to the transport plan which supports the county council's pledge to achieve net zero carbon by 2030, which Councillors adopted as part of the authority's Environmental Policy in November 2019.

Buzz created as pollinator paradises set for Norfolk roadsides

Tripling the number of Roadside Nature Reserves in Norfolk were among a range of green measures considered by County Councillors last July.

Fewer cuts for rural roadsides, a pollinator action plan, and 188 more roadside nature reserves are all on the cards as part of plans to boost biodiversity along roads and paths across the county.

Also on the agenda were plans to help boost cycling and walking across the county, and development of a new verge management policy which will include information for parish and town councils wishing to take on responsibility for verge cutting in their local area. The aim is to help involve local communities more in decisions about verge management near them.

With my best wishes

Bill

BILL BORRETT

Member for the Elmham and Mattishall Division

Norfolk County Council