

2016 Annual County Council Report

Council Tax

Following a public consultation on ways of reducing Norfolk County Council costs each committee considered the responses relevant to its department and made recommendations for consideration by the full Council when it agreed its budget in February. This enabled the Council to find savings of £42 million for the next financial year. This is part of a total of £100million which it needs to save over the next three years.

The Government then stated that Councils could increase their tax by up to 2% and could also increase by another 2% to cover the increasing cost of Adult Social Care, so, Norfolk County Council agreed to increase Council Tax by 3.9% which includes 2% specifically for Adult Social Care. This is an extra 88p per week for a Band D property.

As funding from Government will be decreasing over the next few years it has allocated the Council an extra £4.6 million, for this year only, to cover one-off funding towards 'invest to save' initiatives that will contribute towards the budget in the future.

Acknowledging the public response to the consultation, the Council decided not to close any recycling centres, libraries or fire stations as part of the cost cutting exercise.

Fire Service

Having investigated ways of further reducing costs the Fire Service are sharing some station premises and as they have begun working more closely with the Police Service some of their management teams have moved into Police Headquarters in Wymondham.

Re imagining Norfolk

Each department is looking for ways of delivering the same services more economically.

The customer website has been reviewed and updated to make it easier for local residents to report problems and track their progress, access information or contact a specific department.

Highways

This year we have agreed 122 Parish Partnership Schemes which will enable villages to put in safety schemes such as flashing signs, footpaths, trods, wig-wags, bus shelters, etc.

There will also be a new £1.5 million fund for small projects and potholes.

It has been acknowledged that there is a problem with the tarmac used on roads in some areas and the company concerned will be covering the cost of resurfacing those areas.

Due to the mild winter the Council saved £350,000 of the funding allocated for gritting the roads.

Work had begun on the Northern Distributer Route which will run from Postwick to the Fakenham Road and should be completed by 2018. A Wensum Valley Final Link committee has been set up to look at how this road might be connected to the A47 to make another ring road around the outskirts of Norwich.

Education

Ofsted has judged 82% of Norfolk primary schools and 77% of secondary schools as 'good' or better.

National figures at the beginning of March showed Norfolk topped the poll of those getting their preferred secondary school. 95.4% of primary school pupils in Norfolk (more than 7,500 children) were allocated a place at their first preference secondary school for September.

Adult Education

Adult Education has been renamed Norfolk Community Learning Services.

Where it is apparent that students on qualification courses need support in basic English and Maths these will in future be delivered as part of that course.

All tutors have attended Safeguarding training so that they know who to contact if students appear to need extra support.

Broadband

Phase one has been completed and 185,885 homes and businesses have been given access to fibre-enabled Broadband. The original agreement with BT on rolling out Broadband was based on a 20% take up but it has attracted far more interest and a clause in the contract ensures that NCC gets a share of the extra profit. This has resulted in Norfolk County Council getting an extra £5.3million which it is re-investing in Broadband. This money will be used to extend Broadband even further and connect some of the harder to reach homes and businesses.

Public Health

Funding available from Public Health has enabled libraries to deliver some health focused activities including a scheme called Reading well: Books on prescription. Local arts groups are also providing creative activities to promote health and wellbeing in libraries, homes for the elderly and early help venues for families and other community venues.

Early Help Hubs are being set up in the Districts to provide information for families needing support and advice on subjects such as mental health, Housing Benefits, debt, welfare, substance misuse, children's services.

Adult Care

Norfolk County Council has invested an additional £1.1 in Norfolk First Support which provides reablement workers who help people gain independence and confidence in carrying out everyday tasks after a spell in hospital and help prevent readmissions.

Parish Councils

I endeavour to attend all Parish Council meetings but occasionally I have to miss one due to another meeting elsewhere. Parish clerks know that they can contact me anytime if there is a problem in the area that I can help with.

Margaret Dewsbury