

We kept within the budget that we set for last year and we have just agreed a £409 million revenue budget for this year. We will invest an extra £6million to address the growing demand for Adult Social Services and another £14.5 million to tackle pressures on the looked after children service. The Revenue Support Grant that we receive from government is £39million this year but it has been gradually reducing and will cease next year.

To help make the money go further we have adopted a new 'Norfolk Futures Strategy' based on four principles:

- *Offering our help early to prevent and reduce demand for specialist services
- *Joining up our work so that similar activities and services are easily accessible, done well and done once
- *Being business-like and making use of digital technology to ensure value for money
- *Using evidence and data to target our work where it can make the most difference.

Highways

You will have noticed that there have been several road closures just lately. In November Norfolk received an additional £12.694million from Government to spend on road maintenance. To date 125,000m² of worn out highway surface has been replaced.

Transport for Norwich has also received £7.3 million towards sustainable transport schemes and the Department for Transport has awarded £98million to the Gt Yarmouth Third River Crossing.

Broadband

Thousands more homes and businesses will be able to access Superfast Broadband. Thanks to Norfolk County Council securing an extra £11million funding Better Broadband for Norfolk should deliver 95% coverage across the county by March 2020.

Mobile signals

Following a survey of mobile signals across the county the council has created a map showing over 200 council owned sites with poor mobile coverage. These are being offered to mobile operators as potential sites for new masts to boost the phone signals in those areas.

Early Childhood and Family Service

The Early Childhood and Family Service has been restructured to include more outreach groups in libraries, nurseries and community centres as well as the 15 new service bases, in order to reach families in most need of the services.

The council will be investing £120million in special educational needs and disabilities provision. We will be providing four new special schools plus specialist bases in mainstream schools to create 500 extra school places.

Education and safety

Norfolk was ranked 6th. (Out of 31 peer councils) for Road Safety Education in a Highways and Transport survey.

The Fire Service continues to hold Crucial Crew events to educate primary school children about various dangers including fire, water, internet, road safety, etc. Over 6,000 Primary School children have attended these events since they began.

Fire and Rescue Service

Last year the Fire Service worked very hard rescuing people from the Beast from the East snow storms in the spring and fighting field fires in the summer when the weather was exceptionally hot.

Apprenticeships

The council works with local businesses to provide apprenticeships for all ages. Last year there were 2,030 apprenticeships started in Norfolk.

Libraries

Following another successful summer reading scheme for children last year, this years theme will be 'Space Travel' to commemorate the 50th anniversary of landing on the moon.

Adult Social Care

A new network of "life Connectors" will provide advice and support to enable people to remain in their own homes and communities.

We are also investing £29million in Housing with Care to deliver 3,000 extra homes for older people over the next ten years.

The Carers Charter was launched in November as part of a national campaign to help unpaid carers, organisations and communities understand their rights and help improve the lives of carers. They are an enormous, hidden resource which saves the public purse billions of pounds each year.

Trading Standards

Following a successful joint conference with Suffolk last autumn, which was attended by over 200 organisations interested in helping to protect people against SCAMS and fraud, a Norfolk Against SCAMs Partnership has been set up to draw together local councils, Police, businesses and community and voluntary groups which will work together to warn local people about SCAMs and fraud. They are already planning another conference for November.

I endeavour to attend all Parish council meetings but unfortunately there are often other meetings that I also have to attend on the same evening. Parish clerks know they can contact me anytime if there is a problem in the area that I can assist with.

Margaret Dewsbury