

2017 Annual County Council Report

Council Tax

This year the Government has agreed that Councils can increase their tax by up to 3% to cover the increasing cost of Adult Social Care, so Norfolk County Council has agreed an overall increase of 4.8% to allow 1.8% to cover the increasing cost of the other services.. This is a rise of £57.15 per annum for a Band D property and will enable the County Council to invest an additional £25 million to support Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

All departments are looking for ways of delivering the same services more economically. There has been some internal restructuring to enable departments to operate more economically, eg. there are now three Highways areas instead of four.

Highways

We have just agreed 137 Parish Partnership Schemes which will enable villages to put in safety schemes such as flashing signs, footpaths, trods, wig-wags, bus shelters, etc. The scheme will be run again next year.

Work on the Northern Distributer Route from Postwick to the Fakenham Road is on schedule and should be completed by Christmas. A committee has been set up to find the best route to continue this road and join it to the A47.

Highways England has just announced four options for dualling the A47 between North Tuddenham and Easton and improvements to the Thickthorn roundabout junction both of which should commence in 2020.

A by-pass for Long Stratton has also been agreed and should start around 2020.

Locally we have been looking at ways of slowing the traffic to make areas safer for pedestrians.

Education

Ofsted's Annual Report identified Norfolk as the fifth most improved county, nationally, for pupils achieving 'Good' or 'Outstanding' at secondary schools over the last four years.

GCSE results for 2016 showed Norfolk as 'above national average' for the first time in a decade.

Adult Education

Adult Education is now called Norfolk Community Learning Services and has been restructured to enable it to operate more economically.

Where it is apparent that students on qualification courses need support in basic English and Maths these are now delivered as part of their chosen course.

Early Help

South Norfolk the first district to set up an Early Help Hub working jointly with Norfolk County Council and the Police to provide one room where all services can come together to support local people. This enables Children's Services, Health Visitors, Adult Services, Public Health, Police, Trading Standards and others to work together to resolve problems for local residents. We aim to support families and assist older and vulnerable adults to stay independent and live in their own homes for longer through services such as our Care and Repair and Handyman Schemes.

Adult Care

In the east we have been working with an NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to provide Healthy Homes Assistance – a project to help facilitate hospital discharge, reduce risks around the home and reduce re admissions to hospital.

Last year Norfolk County Council agreed to accept 50 vulnerable Syrian Refugees through the Governments Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The first five families arrived at the beginning of March and will probably settle in Norwich. Many local faith and voluntary groups have offered their support.

Broadband

The Better Broadband for Norfolk programme should have provided 95% of Norfolk homes and businesses with access to high speed broadband by 2020.

Libraries

The Library and Information Service won a national award called Libraries Change Lives for its pioneering work in partnership with Public Health.

Libraries have become Social Hubs providing theatrical and musical performances and activities such as board games and knit and natter groups, as well as story telling for adults and children, to encourage social interaction and help combat loneliness.

We are also continuing our annual Summer Reading Challenge for children and last year we also ran a well-supported writing competition.

Museums

The museum service has been bringing in many grants which have enabled them to put on successful displays at Gressenhall and Gt Yarmouth. They are currently raising £15 million to transform the Keep at the Castle Museum so that people can see how it looked in Norman times.

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