

Norfolk County Council report for Annual Parish Meeting on 17th April 2024

Council Tax

NCC agreed a Council Tax increase of 4.99% (that is 2.99% for general services and 2% increase for Adult Social Services). Overall the budget will provide an extra £60million for Adult Social Services and £35 million extra for Children's Services. This is necessary because the demand on these services increases every year.

The Rise Up children's mental health and wellbeing programme supported over 10,000 children in its first year.

Devolution

The Council also agreed to accept the £600 million, (over 30 years), Devolution Deal offered by the Government. This will ensure we have extra funding and the power to decide how it should be spent. The deal will include having a Directly Elected Leader who will be elected in May 2025.

Highways

Twenty-seven new gritters have been purchased to help keep the main roads safe during the winter months.

The service has been working hard dealing with the results of the flooding as well as the usual potholes etc,

This year there were 118 bids for Parish Partnership funding. NCC is helping all of them. The joint investment in these schemes will total £1,040,586. Generally contributions are 50/50 but very small parish councils only have to contribute 25%.

Flooding

The Leader and the Chairman of the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance went to London to lobby ministers for more funding to stop flooding because Norfolk is the 10th most at risk of surface water flooding, out of 149 authority areas.

The discussion also included how to capture the excess water for use in times of drought during the hot summer months, and extra support needed for coastal erosion as Norfolk has one of the fastest eroding coastlines.

Bus Services

Norfolk received funding from the Department of Transport to improve local bus services. As well as providing extra buses the plan is to expand some routes and increase the frequency of services on key routes.

Bus fares have been kept low and from February 1st people holding a disabled concessionary travel pass have been able to travel free of charge at any time. Previously they were only allowed to travel free at off peak times.

Waste disposal

Until the beginning of this year people had to pay to dispose of DIY construction and demolition waste. From this year waste from small scale projects in up to 100 litre bags can be disposed of free of charge. This is limited to four visits to a tip within four weeks.

Traders must continue to pay for all waste disposal.

Environment

As part of the aim to plant one million trees over five years to help reduce carbon emissions in the area the council has also been growing trees at Gressenhall to sell to other organisations. Last May the council also adopted a Climate strategy which includes retrofitting our buildings, sustainable transport and developing a green economy.

The Council is also preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and is one of 48 local authorities working with the Government on supporting nature.

Public Health

The Council's Public Health Strategic Plan commits to delivering a new programme of tobacco control and Stop Smoking initiatives to help people stop smoking and create smoke free environments. Although E-cigarettes (vaping) is a useful tool to help people stop smoking they are not good for adults or children who have never smoked. It is illegal to sell vapes to under 18s and the council has been working with schools on preventing children from taking up vaping and providing guidance on dealing with vaping incidents.

Adult Education

The Adult Learning Service was rated 'Good' following it's Ofsted inspection. One third of courses are now provided on line to cater for people unable to travel to them. The Construction Centre on the edge of Norwich is doing well and there will be Adult Learning Centres in the new Community Hubs being developed in Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth.

Fire Service

The Fire Service was also rated 'Good' after it's HMI inspection. It has worked hard dealing with wild fires and flooding as well as other incidents over the last year. They also do a lot of prevention and protection work, advising people on how to keep their homes and businesses safe from fire.

Libraries

As well as providing books, information and free internet access our libraries also provide a variety of activities for all ages, from Bounce and Rhyme for babies to Knit and Natter for older people plus a warm space in which to meet.

The Summer Reading Scheme for school aged children took place as usual as did the Holiday Playschemes.

Norfolk County Council continues to provide a wide range of services to support adults, children, businesses and organisation.

Margaret Dewsbury