

## **County Councillor's report March 2021:**

### **Budget for investment and recovery agreed**

A budget for recovery has been agreed by Norfolk County Council to support communities, the economy and the environment.

A £439 million net revenue budget, a £102 million boost for roads and infrastructure and a 3.99 per cent Council Tax rise have been agreed, at the full council meeting on 22 February

The decision means the council will:

- Raise general Council Tax by the Government's guideline figure – 1.99 per cent – and raise the adult social care precept by two per cent in 2021/22 and one per cent the following year. This would raise the county council's element of Council Tax by 3.99 per cent, increasing the share of band D bills by £56.43 to £1,472.94 for 2021-22
- Invest £45.7m to meet cost and other pressures in services, including £28.2m in adult social care, £7m in children's services and £10.5m in community and environmental services
- Set aside £18.8m for Covid-19 costs in 2021-22
- Make savings of £41.2m, including a net £20.4m of new proposals
- Invest £102m in the capital programme, taking the total infrastructure programme to £537.66m. New items include £11.5m for supported housing for young adults, £4m for children's residential homes and investment in the Long Stratton bypass and new libraries
- Invest £2m in new funding to respond to flooding, including an additional £350,000 in revenue budget provision, £235,000 in highways spending to reduce road flooding risks and £1.5m for the creation of a new flood reserve to fund urgent works, repairs and to enable recommendations from flood investigation reports
- Increase by £4,000 each councillor's Local Member Fund, taking the total to £10,000 to be made available to local parishes and communities to fund environmental projects
- Provide £3m for improvements to greenways, footpaths and the national and Norfolk Trails network in the county

## **New service from Norfolk Libraries helping families learn from home**

Families that are struggling with home learning have a new place to turn to for advice and support. Norfolk Libraries has set up a phone line which serves as a first stop for parents and carers in the county using new devices to teach their children.

The phone line aims to provide a friendly voice to families that aren't familiar with home learning technology, including those that have received a new laptop or tablet as a result of Norfolk County Council's 'Every Child Online' campaign. If anyone needs help using online services, they can speak to a member of library staff on 01603 774777 from 10am-6pm Monday to Friday and 10am-4pm on Saturdays.

## **Two new special schools announce public consultations ahead of opening**

Plans are progressing at speed for two new special schools currently being built in Fakenham and Great Yarmouth by Norfolk County Council as part of its £120 million programme to transform special education.

Both schools have announced their new name and confirmed the appointment of new headteachers.

And six-week public consultations have launched for both settings. These aim to give local people including parents, residents, community groups, school leaders, parent/carer organisations and others, the chance to express their views, and ask questions about a range of issues including plans for the site, access and transport, how the school will operate within the local community, and the vision and ethos.

## **Have your say about the future of rural Norfolk**

Norfolk County Council (NCC) and Collison and Associates Limited are working in partnership on a review of the Norfolk Rural Strategy. The partnership is inviting people who live and work in Norfolk to have their say and help shape the future of Norfolk.

[Previous versions of the Norfolk Rural Strategy](#) have been used to secure funding, such as the £9m of LEADER funding awarded to hundreds of community and small business projects across Norfolk since 2016. The previous strategy also initiated campaigns to improve rural

digital connectivity and the work to develop the [Norfolk Natural Capital Assets Evidence Compendium](#), which provides a detailed evidence base on our natural environment.

The aim of this survey is to ensure that rural Norfolk continues to thrive, setting out a blueprint to deliver a positive change for its rural communities. NCC believes that to create this positive change, partnership with the community is important and feedback from residents vital to its success.

[If you would like to have your say on the future of rural Norfolk you can complete the online survey.](#)

### **Encouraging children's return to school**

Schools and academies across Norfolk are looking forward to welcoming back thousands of children and young people from Monday 8 March.

Norfolk's 422 schools are well practised in their range of extra hygiene and safety measures to support pupils' safe return to the classroom, including one-way systems, staggered start times, regular testing for school staff, and extra cleaning to help protect children and teachers.

And these measures have been boosted by new testing regimes for students in secondary schools and further education colleges and the ongoing national vaccination programme, which is immunising thousands of people each week.

### **Norfolk libraries to scrap late fees for children as part of post-pandemic reading push**

The Norfolk Libraries and Information service have put forward ambitious plans to improve children and young people's reading skills which have been diminished nationally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proposals, to be considered at the Council's cabinet on 8 March, include the removal of overdue charges for everyone under the age of 16, universal membership of the county's e-library through Norfolk's schools and the introduction of a new '1000 books before school' reading challenge.

## **Bereaved families reminded of advice and support available**

Bereaved families are reminded of the support available and the importance of registering a death and organising a funeral in a timely manner.

Additional support is available to help bereaved families to make the necessary arrangements and to offer a listening ear.

To book a death registration appointment call Norfolk County Council Registration Offices on 0344 800 8020. [Further information about the registration service.](#)

[Further information about support including links to specialist organisations.](#)

Ed Connolly