

Norfolk County Council highlights for 2021/22



In the same way as the whole county responded to Covid, work is ongoing to welcome our **new residents from Ukraine to Norfolk**. In a fast moving situation key responsibilities are about keeping people safe through DBS checks and checks on properties.

A **£464 million** net revenue budget for 2022/23 has been agreed, a **£25m increase** from last year, with increased spending across key service areas and capital programmes, along with a 2.99 per cent Council Tax rise was agreed to enable Norfolk to build back better after the pandemic. The overall capital and revenue spend is £1.45bn. **Adult Social Services** will see an additional **£35.4m** of investment, against savings of £10.5m, **Children's Services** will receive **£23.2m** of further investment, with a further **£10m** this year for the **SEND School Programme**, with £12m against planned savings and **Community and Environmental Services** will see an additional **£11.2m**, against savings of £3.5m. There is a new **£10m pothole fund** to draw upon, **new recycling centres** across the County, **£5m on library upkeep** and extension of services and **£12m on the Better Broadband project**.

The major financial challenge will come in 2023/24 which is why we are commissioning an organisational review to ensure we are as efficient and effective as we can be.

There has been substantial **Beryl Bikes and E-Scooters** uptake during the past year, with the average journey being over 3.5km (taking multiple car journeys out of the City) and multiple Local Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) plans being developed across the County (including Greater Norwich, King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Dereham). **This is important to us in the West, as it will include a major push to increase opportunities for safe cycling throughout the AONB and surrounding area.**

In a major boost to Norfolk's ambitions to run a **net zero transport system** £3.2million in funding has been secured to introduce 15 electric buses to the network in Norwich. The funding has been secured from Department for Transport (DfT) in a joint bid with First Bus for the 'Zero Emission Bus Regional Access' (ZEBRA) scheme. This bid is matched by £3.6m of local investment from First Bus and will deliver 15 battery electric buses which will be in operation by March 2024.

More important for us (as electric buses are not yet able to operate on routes as long as those undertaken in rural rather than urban areas, NCC has been successful in winning £50 million funds from the **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**. **This means I can now push for more frequent and later services along the Coast and to and from Lynn, bus services that link to train timetables, better and more direct services to QEH as well as minibuses to link park and ride centres with coastal villages and their beaches.**

Norwich Western Link is a key **strategic infrastructure project** alongside the Long Stratton By Pass and the West Winch Housing Access Road demonstrating how we are working across the whole county. The Great Yarmouth Third River Cross is due for completion in 2024.

A new service to support some of Norfolk's most vulnerable young people to live within families and achieve their full potential called **New Roads** launched on June 1st 2021. It was set up by Norfolk County Council with significant investment to give young people access to a dedicated support team that sticks with them, understands them, and helps them to achieve and succeed. Based out of two hubs, in Dereham and Norwich, the service's aim is to give young people stability, reduce risk-taking behaviour and help to avoid the need for long-term residential care, as well as longer term costs to themselves, the wider system and communities.

The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) has formally adopted an overall Strategy, designed to enable county wide responses to flooding across all agencies involved. The Strategy, which lays out the NSFA's vision, objectives, approach and structure, is a major milestone in the development of the Alliance, which was founded in 2021 to bring together all agencies and partners involved in planning for and responding to flooding in Norfolk. A whole river solution for the Burn is one of the priority projects being worked on.

A new single point of contact for flooding in Norfolk has been launched, allowing residents to report any sort of flooding quickly and efficiently. In the event of flooding residents can call 0344 800 8013 giving residents a single point of contact and allowing reports to be made swiftly. Alternatively, residents can continue to report flooding online via [our flooding pages](#). Where there is a potential risk to life from flooding people should still call 999 immediately.

The Council's £1.5m Flood Reserve Fund will be used for additional highway and ditch maintenance, drainage asset improvements work and drainage grips and kerb drains on Norfolk's highways, as well as operations to clear some of the county's 145,305 gullies that help drain rain water. **Our financial response has meant that other partners, notably Anglia Water, has stepped up to the plate to deliver a significant upgrade to their Burn River plant.**

As Chairman of Norfolk Coastal partnership, I have brought together a bidding team to spearhead nature recovery along the North Norfolk coast. Alongside NCC, Norfolk Rivers Trust and key landowners will work with Natural England to be one of 10 projects nationally as a showcase pilot scheme for the new ELMS scheme. There are two parts to this project:

- i. We want to work with landowners along the coastal strip (between the A149 and the sea) from Hunstanton to Weybourne to convert existing arable land into new habitat for nature.
- ii. We want to work with landowners along the Rivers Hun, Stiffkey, Burn and Glaven to convert existing arable land into new habitat for nature.

We want to restore and/or improve 1500 hectares of priority habitat on the Norfolk coast to support the recovery of threatened species and increase biodiversity. We also want to restore rivers in the area, improving water quality and increasing biodiversity along river corridors. Both elements of the project will also support climate change adaptation in the region.

Pavements, cycleways and roads all benefited from the county's **£29m maintenance programme** taking place right across Norfolk. The crucial upkeep work is a key part of the £42 million budget for roads and infrastructure that was agreed in February 2021. This year £4.5m is being spent on maintaining pavements and paths, for example a £167,000 scheme to remove the existing worn and uneven pavement surface on Kennedy Avenue in Gorleston and replace it with a new smooth asphalt surface.

We have an ambitious **Local Transport Plan** supporting a growing economy, strengthening communities and reducing our impact on the environment. A carbon cutting commitment is central to the transport plan which supports the county council's pledge to achieve net zero carbon by 2030, which councilors adopted as part of the authority's Environmental Policy in November 2019.

This will be co-ordinated locally with a Local Walking and Cycling Investment Plan for AONB. I am working with James Wild MP to pressurize DfT to alter the bid parameters of Active Travel Tranche 4 to enable us to win funding that is not just town and city-centric.

James has already been successful in helping me lobby for a change in the law in relation to FHLs, whereby owners have to prove a property is let for a minimum of 0 days a year to be classed as a business (thus avoiding council tax. While this does not go nearly far enough, it does open the door to clarifying the system so that all residents pay for local services, regardless of whether the properties are let out or not.

Tripling the number of **Roadside Nature Reserves** in Norfolk were among a range of green measures agreed last July. Fewer cuts for rural roadsides, a pollinator action plan, and 188 more roadside nature reserves are all on the cards as part of plans to boost biodiversity along roads and paths across the county. There are plans to help **boost cycling and walking across the county**, and development of a new verge management policy which will include information for parish and town councils wishing to take on responsibility for verge cutting in their local area. The aim is to help involve local communities more in decisions about verge management near them.

Norfolk County Council has been recognised for its outstanding support of the armed forces community in Norfolk, following an announcement from the Ministry of Defence. The council has been given the Gold Award, the highest honour handed out through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. The award is given to organisations that employ and support those who serve in the armed forces, service leavers, veterans and their families, with the Gold Award also acknowledging the Council's partnership working through the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board.

The Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Norfolk, managed by Norfolk County Council's Library and Information Service, ran a free online **Summer School in 2021** for 16-25-year-olds to help them decide whether starting their own business might be right for them.

Norfolk is to receive between £115m and £195m of funding as part of the **Government's Project Gigabit to provide 1GB per second broadband** to up to 119,000 premises. Contracts will be awarded from February 2022. Rural homes and businesses across Norfolk and Suffolk will get next-generation gigabit broadband brought to them under a £5 billion plan to level up internet access across the UK. It means families no longer having to battle over bandwidth giving people in rural areas the freedom to live and work more flexibly, with the speed and reliability needed to start and run businesses.

Community and voluntary organisations across Norfolk were awarded £1m from the [Norfolk Social Infrastructure Fund](#) . Total awards were £1.02 million to 25 different organisations, with grants ranging £3,400 all the way up to £250,000. The fund saw 64 applications with funding requests that totalled almost £5million. This was more than double the number of applications received last year. **Bear this in mind when considering potential projects within your parish.**

We got work to B1355 done via the Road safety Community Fund. My thanks to you

Norfolk Adult Social Services have faced a level of unprecedented challenge in 2021/22 as a result of the pandemic, with national and local workforce shortages, rising demand in hospitals and the community and the continued infection risk posed by COVID-19 as well as other recurring respiratory viruses such as flu.

Action being taken by the Council includes:

- Expanding action to support people at home or, where appropriate, in short term residential settings
- Stepping up the council's care recruitment campaign, to tackle staff shortages
- Providing wrap-around support for care settings
- Providing assistive technology, with 100 video phones sent out to homes
- Improving capacity in the Norfolk First Response service
- Supporting mental health services, with three new step down services

We have established a Hunstanton Town Board in order to use Levelling Up to bring forward some of the many ideas floated over the past decade. Working with the Town Council, the Leader of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council and Rt Hon James Wild MP, we Board will use 2022 to deliver concrete costed proposals for the Town to review.

