

# NCC Annual Report for Parish Council – April 2022

The Council recently agreed that the Council Tax for the next financial year will increase by 1.99% plus another ringfenced 1% to help fund Adult Social Care (Social Care Precept) as allowed by the government.

## Adult Care

The demand for Adults Social Care has continually increased. There has been an increase in domestic abuse and mental health issues since the start of the pandemic plus over the last couple of years Adult Services has supported thousands of people who have been discharged from hospital, due to the demands on the NHS and their capacity issues, but still need support. Many were able to return to their homes but others still needed short term care in a care home.

The White Paper with proposals to reform the service has just been released and the Health and Care Bill is awaiting Royal Assent. These will help reform the service and build closer collaboration between the Council and the NHS in the coming years.

As people are beginning to get out and about again Norfolk County Council wants to make it easier for disabled people and their families to plan a day out or go shopping in local towns so we are providing new toilets called Changing Places which include space for carers, adult sized changing benches and other equipment that they might need.

## Business Support

Norfolk County Council's Go Digital Grant Scheme has been supporting small and medium sized businesses with free advice and funding to help them adapt and make better use of digital technology.

## Employment

The uptake of apprenticeships across the county has increased by 53% and is now 10% higher than the national figure. Apprenticeships are a Government funded scheme for all ages. <https://apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org/> The County council has committed to continue it's Recruit, Retain, Reward financial incentive scheme for Norfolk businesses to help them recover from the problems they have experienced over the last couple of years.

A bursary grant is also available to support apprentices' travel and equipment costs.

## Children's Services

An increasing number of children are in need of extra support and there is also a need for more school places. New schools are being planned and £120 million has already been allocated to provide 500 more specialist places and for three new SEND schools. The first two schools have just been opened at Fakenham and Gt Yarmouth and the third school is about to be built this year, at Easton. It should open in the spring of 2023. The funding will also cover eleven Specialist Resource Bases in mainstream schools across the county.

The Fostering System has been reviewed and £700,000 per year will be invested to pay higher fostering fees to carers who look after children with the highest needs. This replaces a system that has been in place for 30 years, since 1993.

Social Services, PfA (People from Abroad) Team have prepared support for women and children arriving from Ukraine including unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

## Active Norfolk

Active Norfolk, which is based at Easton college, has been working closely with Norfolk County Council to provide healthy activities for children during school holidays. The council provided the food for children who qualified for free school meals.

#### Zero emissions

The council has just completed it's first year of distributing trees following it's aim to plant a million trees over five years to help counteract emissions.

41%of street lighting has been converted to energy efficient LEDs. We will complete the move to low energy lighting in all estate owned freehold buildings by 2024 and we are ceasing the installation of gas/oil boilers unless alternatives are unfeasible.

#### Recycling

There are now two new recycling centres on the edge of Norwich. One at Harford Park and Ride replacing the Ketteringham site and the other at Sprowston replacing the Mile Cross site. Sprowston has already opened a large reuse shop. This is the fifteenth of Norfolk's 20 recycling centres to have a re use shop.

The Wymondham site should be moving to a larger site later this year.

#### Highways

The design of the Norwich Western Link has been refined to minimise the impact on woodland where a colony of bats have been found roosting.

Following on from the success of the Beryl bikes and E-scooters in Norwich the scooter trial has been extended until November 2022.

The results of the Parish Partnership applications have just been announced. The scheme will be run again next year.

#### Trading Standards

Trading Standards has prosecuted several people for fraud over the last year and the SCAMs team has been working with businesses and community organisations to try to keep people aware of the latest scams and not be caught out.

#### Museums and libraries

During the pandemic many museum visits had to be cancelled or carried out virtually but over the last year museums and libraries have gradually reopened with visitors wearing masks and socially distancing. The Castle Museum is once again hosting weddings and visits from groups of school children to the displays in other parts of the castle.

The transformation of the Castle Keep at the Castle Museum to a replica of what it was like in Norman times is progressing well. There is a new Royal Palace Reborn Project film which has been shared on line. By the end of February approximately 37,000 people had viewed it on Facebook. The project will be completed and opened in 2023.

#### Fire Service

During the year the Fire Service has received some new appliances and training towers have been built at the stations for them to train at height.

They have continued to assist the ambulance service when they could not keep up with demand due to the back up of ambulances waiting at hospitals.

The Ashes to Art project which they organised to raise funds for the Fire Service charity and Break raised £8,000. They invited artists to take away an old fire helmet, decorate it then bring it back to be displayed in Norwich then auctioned off.

Crucial Crew which provides multi organisation events to teach children how to stay safe in a wide range of scenarios – fire, water, on line, etc. - has just restarted events for groups of school children.

#### Adult Learning

When the pandemic caused lockdown many other Adult Education Services closed their courses but Norfolk moved all courses, apart from pottery and silver smithing, online and added 200 more. This made them more available to people who could not travel and enabled people to continue studying for qualifications as well as meet up with others during lockdown. Some course are now going back to face to face but some are a mix of virtual and face to face. This enabled 145 students to attend the same yoga class.

We have also just launched two Construction courses for people who want to do DIY or learn skills for employment. To support equality of opportunity the service is encouraging take up by female learners and they currently make up a third of students.

#### Norfolk Association of Local Councils

During the year, NALC, which had moved into County Hall a couple of years ago improved it's collaboration with Norfolk County Council. NALC now employs two staff funded by NCC to provide a dedicated link between NCC and all local Town and Parish Council Associations. This will help raise the profile of Parish Councils and the work they are doing as well as helping them to access help and information from County Council services.

#### Future provision

The Government's Levelling Up White paper was released at the beginning of February and its objectives have been the subject of much debate and discussion.

The Government has yet to release more information about funding and how things can be progressed.

Cllr. Margaret Dewsbury

Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships  
Norfolk County Council: Hingham Division