

County Councillor for Necton and Launditch Division

Report for 2021/2022

Overview 2021/22

- 70% of Norfolk streetlights converted, or work underway to convert to LED
- 96.7% of highways inspections completed within timescale
- 99.6% of dangerous highway defects dealt with within timescales set out in the Transport Asset Management Plan
- 94% of Looked after Children (LAC) with an up-to-date Personal Education Plan
- Completed 51,000 Adult Social Care Assessments for 20,700 people.

Highways: Maintenance of Norfolk's 9000km of roads and associated infrastructure was allocated £42m (revenue and capital) in the budget set in February 2021. The backlog of maintenance has largely been addressed by the team led by the local highway engineer. This has allowed for quicker resolution of defects, especially those which are urgent.

The public examination of the Development Consent Order (DCO) for the dualling of the A47 between Tuddenham and Easton concluded in February. The Planning Inspectorate will submit a report, with recommendations, to the Secretary of State (SoS) within 3 months. The SoS will then determine the DCO. If approved the scheme will relieve the daily congestion between Dereham and Norwich and allow sustainable economic growth and development.

Norfolk County Council has continued to work towards building a new road between the A47 (hopefully dualled) and the A1067 near Taverham at the junction with the Broadland Northway. This will stop the "rat running" through the villages between the 2 roads and reduce the traffic levels (especially HGVs) using the B1145 to access Kings Lynn.

Broadband: Hard to reach premises in Norfolk are 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 and will give people in rural areas the freedom to live and work more flexibly, with the speed and reliability needed to start and run businesses.

Flooding: 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 to report it. Alternatively, residents can continue to report flooding on NCCs website. The new number gives residents a single point of contact and allows reports to be made swiftly.

Different agencies respond to different types of flooding, which has historically made reporting a flood by telephone more complicated when and where it is not possible to ascertain the source of floodwaters. Where there is a potential risk to life from flooding people should still call 999 immediately.

Norfolk's Cabinet considered the allocation of the council's £1.5m Flood Reserve Fund to support urgent works, repairs and to enable recommendations from flood investigation reports. The Reserve Fund was set up in the annual budget for 2021/22 agreed by the County Council in their budget meeting in February.

The Cabinet meeting, held on 6th September, discussed the proposed allocation of the funding, including £695k for additional highway and ditch maintenance and £365k for drainage asset improvements. This funding will be used for work on the 285,864 metres of drainage grips and 31,037 metres of kerb drains on Norfolk's highways, as well as operations to clear some of the county's 145,305 gullies that help drain rainwater.

The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA), under the Chairmanship of General Lord Dannatt, 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 earlier this year by the Council to bring together all agencies and partners involved in planning for and responding to flooding in Norfolk.

Adult Social Care: Plans to support Adult Social Services with the expected "winter pressures" have been unveiled.

A report was heard by Norfolk County Council's Cabinet in December saying that Adult Social Services across the country are facing unprecedented challenges. However, here in Norfolk practical solutions are being put in place.

The report said: ‘Norfolk Adult Social Services face 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. Adult Social Services received 20,279 calls for support between April and October this year – an increase of 9,400 over four years.

Action 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 services

Norfolk County Council is taking a step closer to establishing a new integrated approach to health and care by agreeing their support for new local Health and Wellbeing Partnerships, putting local communities at the heart of health and care in their area. Under the new Health and Care Bill, Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are being established in all areas of the country to drive changes that are intended to lead to better, more joined-up care for the population. Much of the activity to deliver integrated health and care and improve the population’s health will happen more locally in the places where people live and work, meaning the new Health and Wellbeing Partnerships will play a key role in driving forward this activity.

Schools and Children’s Services: More than a dozen new primary schools could be needed in Norfolk in the next decade, to cater for growing pupil numbers in areas of development. A report to Norfolk County Council’s Cabinet highlighted the scale of school development that is likely to be needed to support Norfolk’s growing communities. It addresses both demographic changes and population growth from new housing. The report, discussed by members on 31st January, provided a snapshot of the council’s plans to ensure there are sufficient school places for Norfolk children aged four to 16. Alongside district councils, the County Council expects to secure nearly £100m in developer contributions for the proposed new and extended schools but if all the places are needed, a further £191m would need to be found. Some of this will be met by Community Infrastructure Levy and government grant contributions. Most children in care in Norfolk are well looked after and receive good support for their emotional and mental health and education,

Ofsted inspectors have found. A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited Norfolk County Council in October for a two-day focused visit of the council's services for children in its care. In a letter detailing their findings, inspectors said that social workers know their children well, listen to them and help them to understand their experiences. Ofsted's visit follows a similar focused visit in 2019, which looked at how the council responds to child safeguarding calls and referrals. Following that visit, inspectors described the quality of decision making as "consistently strong".

The 2022/23 Budget: Council tax was set at the meeting of Council in February and was increased by 2.99%; 1.99% increase in the general rate and a 1% increase in the adult social care budget.

Adult social services will see an additional £35.4m of investment against savings of £10.5m. Children's services will receive a further £23.2m, with a further £10m this year for the SEND school programme.

Community and Environmental Services will receive an additional £11.2m; there will be a £10m pothole fund, new recycling centres across the county, £5m on library upkeep and extension of services and £12m on the Better Broadband project.

The councilors personal budget of £10k will continue for 22/23.

Your County Councilor: The Necton and Launditch division covers around 80 square miles of rural Norfolk and is the 3rd largest division in the county. It consists of 22 parishes which have between them 19 parish councils, 2 parish meetings and one parish administered by the district councilor.

As well as attending as many parish council meetings in the evening as I am able, I also attend meetings at County Hall and other informal meetings from home using Teams. At County Hall I attend meetings of full Council, and am a member of the Scrutiny Committee, the People and Communities Select Committee and the Audit Committee. Additionally, I am Chair of the Councils Standards Committee and Chair of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel. I am also a substitute member of the Planning (Regulatory) Committee. Using Teams, I attend the Adult Social Care Performance Review Panel and regularly have conference calls with officers and other members to discuss matters affecting my division.

Mark Kiddle-Morris,

Member for Necton and Launditch Division.
Norfolk County Council.