

Liberal Democrat County Councillors Report for North Walsham Town Council

26th of July 2021

What's Going on at the County Council?

There has not been a full council meeting of Norfolk County Council since the AGM on the 24th of May, except for the meeting called to decide about the completion of the ring road on the 7th June. The meeting due to be held on the 19th of July was cancelled due to 'cost and logistics' of holding it at Norfolk Showground, it was uncertain whether the COVID restrictions would be lifted. The next meeting is the 27th of September.

Norfolk County Council need to save more than £39 million next year – or £47.8 million, if Council Tax is frozen. NCC predicts it will have to save a total of £109 million over the next four years and plans to include a one per cent increase in the adult social care precept, deferred from 2021-22.

The proposed savings for next year, per department, are:

- Adult Social Services: £17.700m
- Children's Services: £8.700m
- Community and Environmental Services: £8.700m
- Finance and Commercial Services: £1.800m
- Finance General: £1.300m
- Governance: £0.400m
- Strategy and Transformation: £0.500m
- Total savings target: £39.100m

The jointly owned Norwich Airport Industrial Estate is set to go on sale. The site currently provides a net income of around £800k per year, with 60 per cent going to the county council and 40 per cent to the city council. While this income will be lost in the event of a sale, without further investment the cost of maintaining the estate will be taken from the income it generates.

The Social Infrastructure Fund is Norfolk County Council's capital grants scheme for voluntary and non-profit making groups. Set up in 2020, grants of up to £250,000 are available for groups who are involved in community projects and initiatives that benefit the residents of Norfolk. Groups can use the funding to make improvements to their existing facilities, or to fund new initiatives and projects. Applications to this fund are now open and expect to close on the 10th of September:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding/norfolk-social-infrastructure-fund>

Norfolk Adult Social Services and Norfolk and Waveney CCG are using Covid funding to send out special packs to support unpaid carers earlier this year – and now a second batch of packs are available for those who missed out first time around. The packs include some Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support recipients in their role as a carer, but also includes a range of items for the carer to enjoy, including chocolate and other items to bring a little joy in these difficult times. Anyone who would like to receive a pack free of charge can register their details online, where their details will be assessed. Those who are eligible will have a pack posted directly to their home. To apply, visit:

https://forms.norfolk.gov.uk/service/carers_wellbeing_pack

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Cllr Lucy Shires – North Walsham East

NHOSC – Norfolk Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Stuart Richardson has been appointed as the new Chief Executive for NSFT. A learning disability nurse by background, Stuart built his 28-year career in mental health and learning disability services through clinical and service lead roles within the NHS, social care and the voluntary sector. Stuart, who lives in Suffolk, has worked with NSFT for three years as Chief Operating Officer, leading their work on moving decision making to their front-line clinical teams and the development of their care groups. He became Deputy Chief Executive earlier this year.

N&N and Cromer Hospital are seeking views for their next 5-year plan. They are sharing their draft strategy which is focused on five commitments and are asking for help us by answering these survey questions:

<https://www.nnuh.uk/form/CEA784396811723F7A4C0A1CD85F5930>

Following the inspection of the East of England Ambulance Service, Ofsted have identified an ongoing risk to apprenticeship students being exposed to poor behaviours and felt less able to raise concerns. Considering the Ofsted report, the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has withdrawn funding for their level 3 and 4 apprenticeship learning. This means that although EEEAST will continue to employ apprentices and provide clinical training, their education provision will transfer to another training organisation.

Corporate Parenting Board

We meet as a Corporate Parenting Board on the 13th of July, this board meets quarterly. The Corporate Parenting Board is a cross-party Board where Members can scrutinise Senior Officers on services for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and where Members can hear from young people from the In-Care Council. We heard from a Care Leaver about the power of using their voice to create change about how they are supported.

North Walsham East

I have had several overgrown footpaths reported to me, these have been tidied up within a week of reporting. Highways repairs are quicker than usual, most I have reported are repaired in under 4 weeks. Parking is becoming an increasing issue across the town and this will need collective thinking on how to tackle it.

Speeding on the Brick Kiln Estate

I am continuing to work with the police and highways on how to best tackle the situation, the issues with speeding continue and with the summer holidays here there is an increased risk to children on the estate. Highways have drafted in the Public Health England team to support with messaging on this important issue.

The Town Centre

It was reported to me by NWTC that a repair was needed to the paved area of King Arms Loke, whilst I have reported this and a repair has been undertaken, it is unsatisfactory and does not reflect the importance of these lokes to the appearance of the town. . A local officer had programmed this on an emergency (PB – 4 day) works order to make the area safe only. This will hopefully prevent any trips and falls. More permanent works will require a full footway closure and will have to follow the due legal process.

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Consultation will be required with property owners, and programme dates will have to take account of the busy summer months.

Considering the age of the blocks, trying to match and purchase the exact same ones will not be easy. This will require some Improvisation with possible utilisation of existing blocks.

There has also been an increase in illegal parking within the town centre and sadly this continues to rise. Frequency data is being collected and will be forward to the parking enforcement team to act on the times they should focus on visiting our town. It is not the majority of visitors to our town; it is sadly the few who are causing an issue.

The visitors staying in the grounds of St Nicolas Church are being supported by the NNDC homelessness team, North Walsham Job Centre and North Walsham Foodbank and Community Fridge.

North Walsham Library

The library is the third most used in Norfolk, competing with Wymondham for 2nd place and The Forum for 1st. I met with the Library Manager on the 7th of July to discuss their aspirations for the Town and how we can work together. The Library have a real desire to support literacy in our young people and encourage a reduction in social isolation in our older residents. We have some exciting ideas about future projects, next steps are to invite Cllr Penfold to our next meeting and create a plan for the town.

If you are not a current library member, there are many benefits to joining including free digital access to national newspapers and magazines... a benefit I was not aware of until recently!

Health Inequality

The meetings with the CCG are continuing and I hope to update further after our next meeting. I am hopeful that the CCG will invite NWTC to a presentation to learn more about the issues facing the town and what we can collectively do to tackle them

Chances

I met with the North Norfolk Chances team on the 16th of July to discuss their work and the barriers they are facing. Chances is a project that offers those who are over 16 and unemployed, support to enter work or education. The team we have are local and very passionate about helping people in North Walsham. Residents are able to self-refer by contacting the team here chances@ncab.org.uk or I can refer directly. Learn more about the project here:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/businefss/grants-and-funding/european-funding/eu-programmes/business-growth-innovation-and-skills/chances>

Verge on Bacton Road

It has been reported to me that the lack of maintenance on a verge on Bacton Road is causing a resident's fence to rot, this has been reported to NCC and I am awaiting further information regarding the action that will be taken

Cllr Saul Penfold – North Walsham West

Aylsham Road Safety Scheme

I have been working hard with NCC Highways and with local residents (especially Berni Marfleet) to bring this scheme to fruition and to final installation. I'm delighted to say that the process has begun and you may have noticed the 20mph speed limit now in place on the welcome to North Walsham signs heading

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into town from Felmingham. However, there is more to do to complete the scheme; the 20mph speed limit will not be legal/enforceable until all 'static' signage (entry terminals and repeater signs) is up and the legal Traffic Regulation Order is sealed. We are still awaiting an official date from the NCC Legal team for this.

The VAS (electronic signage) has been ordered and works are to commence soon to install them. **We therefore have a tentative date of 13th August from Highways for full and final completion.**

On the launch and promotion of the scheme, local residents are keen to hold an on-site event for the community, with all those who have helped to achieve success, including Councillors and County Highway Officers. I will liaise with the NCC media team to get as much publicity as possible for this once we have a firm completion date and launch date in place. I will keep the Town Council informed of course.

North Walsham Heritage Action Zone and North Walsham West Proposals

I continue to liaise closely with my District Council colleagues on the Heritage Action Zone in North Walsham and met with the Project Manager on 15th July to discuss the scheme, particularly the opportunities for apprenticeships and learning resources for local schools and families. We are awaiting initial community feedback on the North Walsham West proposals from the Planning team at NNDC.

North Walsham Library

To support Cllr Shires' point about the Library, I am meeting the Manager Alison Hall for a tour and discussion on 27th July as to how I / we can better support and promote the excellent work that it is doing.

Norfolk County Council

I have become a member of the Norfolk Joint Museums Committee and attended my first meeting on 23rd July. I have also become a member of NCC's Audit Committee and its Employment Committee.

Unfortunately as mentioned in the opening section of this report the leading group at NCC decided to cancel our Full Council meeting planned for 19th July and so we were unable to debate the many pressing issues currently facing us in Norfolk.

Many thanks and best wishes

Saul Penfold