

Liberal Democrat County Councillors Report for North Walsham Town Council

30th of November 2021

What's Going on at the County Council?

Farm owners are being asked to take extra care, and members of the public encouraged to stay vigilant, following three deliberate fires at Norfolk farms in recent weeks. All involved stacked straw bales and are believed to have been started deliberately, with Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service attending all the incidents. The first, at 11pm on Wednesday 22 September, was at Tatterford, near Fakenham. It involved 50 tonnes of straw next to a liquid fertiliser tank. It was located on a concrete pad near to a country road. The second fire, on Thursday 23 September at 7.35pm, was at land off Saddlebow Road, Kings Lynn and involved 400 tonnes of straw on a field which had been stacked hours earlier. The straw was located off a farm track and through a locked gate. On Monday 27 September, at Mill Hill Road in Boughton, 300 tonnes of straw in a stack were set alight at around 7pm.

A new service named MiQuit is launching in Norfolk to help pregnant women to quit smoking and improve the health of their baby. The MiQuit service, developed by experts at the University of East Anglia and University of Cambridge and commissioned by Norfolk County Council's Public Health team, provides free text message support for users, sending information and advice directly to their phone. The support is tailored to each user and their lifestyle, ensuring everyone who signs up get the support they need to quit.

Norfolk County Council is calling on people from all backgrounds to consider adopting, as it looks to find loving homes for children in its care. Most people can adopt and there is lots of support and training available for prospective adopters. To find out more, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/adoption or call 01603 638343.

Chances, a £4.9m Norfolk County Council project, co-funded by the European Social Fund, is reaching out to people in Norfolk who have recently lost their jobs or are long-term unemployed who may face barriers to finding work. It aims to help them get back into employment through new opportunities for support and training. Launched in April 2021, the project has already supported nearly 300 participants on their journey to find employment. Individuals who are keen to find out more are welcome to contact the project team directly – contact details and further information is available on the county council website here: www.norfolk.gov.uk/chances

The council must bridge a £39 million budget gap next year. It has already identified £2.2 million of savings and is now bringing forward new proposals, worth £24.4 million:

- Adult Social Services: £12.440 million
- Children's Services: £4.315 million
- Community and Environmental Services: £2.961 million
- Strategy and Transformation: £0.3 million
- Finance and Commercial Services / Finance General: £4.175 million

Great Yarmouth's famous seafront is going green over the coming weeks as the rollout of low carbon LED streetlights in Norfolk has moved to the east coast town. Work is now well

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underway to switch the 195 old lights along Marine Parade and nearby roads to efficient new LEDs. A total of 15,000 lights are being upgraded across the county by 2023, a figure which will add to the 22,000 lights that have already been converted to LED since 2008. This has saved 12,500 tonnes of CO₂.

A programme to keep children active and support families over the Christmas holidays has opened for booking today. Dozens of activities including drama, sports, and arts and crafts, are once again available for all children and young people aged between four and 16 who are at school. They are free for those eligible for means-tested free school meals and chargeable for a small fee for those not in receipt of free school meals. Called Big Norfolk Holiday Fun, the programme is being run by Norfolk County Council and Active Norfolk and is funded as part of the Government's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

The majority of sessions will take place between Monday 20 and Thursday 23 December. They will include a variety of fun activities delivered by a range of providers at locations across the county, including sports, music, arts and other opportunities to learn and develop skills, and a nutritious meal will be provided with each one. There are limited spaces, booking is on a first-come-first-serve basis. The majority of activities have a mix of paid spaces and free spaces for those children eligible for means-tested free school meals. Details of all the sessions available including how to register and book can be found at www.activenorfolk.org/bigholidayfun

The Norfolk Coroner's Service is trying to trace the next of kin of Ian Keith Westwell, aged 63, who resided at Hempstead, Norfolk and died on 13 November 2021. There were no suspicious circumstances that led to his death. Despite carrying out extensive enquiries, no next-of-kin have been identified by the Coroner's Office. It is thought that Mr Westwell came to Norfolk from Boston, Lincolnshire, so may have relatives located around that area. Anyone with information relating to Mr Westwell should contact the Coroner's Office in Norwich on 01603 774773.

Norfolk County Council is consulting the public, until 30th December, on a 2.99 per cent overall rise to its share of Council Tax, plus savings of £31 million (£24.5 million of them in 2022-23). To take part in the consultation, see www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget .

In the lead up to Christmas, Norfolk County Council Children's Services and Waterstones have teamed up again to launch the 2021 Giving Tree appeal, a Christmas project aimed at bringing joy to the county's looked after children. The tree, based at the Castle Street branch in Norwich, will be decorated with hundreds of tags which each represent a child and the book they would like to receive for Christmas. There are requests for books from more than 800 children in the county, with some specifying particular books or authors and others seeking a certain genre or type of book. To support this initiative, please visit this branch anytime until Wednesday 15th December. Select a tag from the Giving Tree and buy the book. The books are then collected and delivered for children in time for Christmas.

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Food vouchers for children eligible for free school meals will continue over both the Christmas and February holidays, through a DWP funded package of support for the winter. Funded via the UK Government's Household Support Fund, the £6.7m package will see the council extend its holiday food voucher offer, as well as continuing to working in partnership with district, borough and city councils, to help those in most need.

On Monday, we met as a full council for only the 2nd time 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 financial reporting was not presented as was previously suggested it would be.

Cllr Lucy Shires – North Walsham East

North Walsham Rapid Response Vehicle

It has been confirmed that the trial period of the North Walsham RRV to be relocated to Fakenham will last for 12 weeks and then will be assessed to see if it has improved ambulance times on the west side of the district.

Speeding on the Brick Kiln Estate

I met with the Assistant Director for Public Health Commissioning on Friday who has insisted that they can provide support with the speed awareness campaign. Whilst, we do seem to have come to a standstill on progress, it actually seems that this is the first time that a Councillor has requested this type of support from the road safety team. We have progress although it is slow.

The Town Centre

I am awaiting confirmation of the date that we should expect to the paved area of King Arms Loke to be properly repaired, the 'winter months' seems to be the current position.

The post that was reversed into at the Market Cross will be replaced when more need replacement, due to the shape of the posts not being something held in stock. I am not content with this and will investigate further.

NCC Highways are going to put right the pavement drain that BT blocked with cement next to the stationers in market place.

Sadlers Wood

Work is continuing with NNDC and NWTC to try and prevent the dirt bikes for misusing the woods. NNDC has assured me that this work is programmed to be undertaken in the next few months.

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Lynfield Estate Drainage

We are still waiting on a response from The Crown as to whether or not the land can be transferred to a public body which Anglian Water will then enable progress on this matter.

North Walsham Library

The library is currently closed due to a heating issue, I am awaiting further information as to the expected re-opening date.

Surveys

I was able to undertake surveys along New Road, Louis Arthur Court, Thomas Dix Court and Park Court with the help of Town Councillor Rob Murphy. This area was surveyed in response to the SNAP priority of ASB on New Rd carpark. A small number of households reported noise disturbances of drivers on the carpark.

Pupils awaiting neurology assessments

The estimated wait is currently a minimum of three years, this issue will be coming to HOSC soon.

Other Highways issues

The 'no left turn' sign outside JB Postle is to be repaired as it is covered in spray paint.

The highways repairs that were reported in my last pothole walk have all been approved for repair, with some repairs already being undertaken. I shall undertake another pothole walk to confirm those that have been fixed.

I will be setting up a site meeting with the Highways team in a few weeks to look to resolve the parking issues on Pound Lane, following a number of residents receiving parking tickets.

Lucy Shires

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