

Sept 2002

The 'dreadful' state of the world

Listening to talk about financial markets at the moment will doubtless remind any fan of Gordon (Thomas the Tank Engine's friend) complaining to the Fat Controller about the Dreadful State of the World.

Sir Hatt was able to reassure Gordon that everything was fine, and luckily this is true of the financial world too - at least where the Local Government Pension Scheme is concerned.

Here are some interesting facts:

1. **Does the Norfolk Fund have enough cash to pay my pension?**

Yes. Well over a £1000 million (£1 billion). This more than covered all the liabilities we had accumulated when the fund was last valued. We were one of the few County funds to be solvent at that time.

2. **Can my pension be lost if future governments decide it costs too much?**

No. Pensions are regarded as 'deferred pay'. Each year you earn another 1/80th of your salary as pension. Once you have earned it, it must be returned to you as a pension. It is possible that changes will be made at some point in the future, but there are no plans to do so at present. The Government recently reviewed the Local Government Pension Scheme and decided that no changes were necessary at this time.

3. **What about the way stock markets are losing money at present.**

This doesn't have any effect on pensions payable as these are guaranteed by law and are based on your years of service and final salary.

Whilst there is concern about the recent market falls, it must be remembered that providing for pensions is a long-term exercise. If you consider that a member could join at 20, retire at 60 and die at 100, you will see that the Pension Fund can afford to take a long-term view.

4. **Does that mean you are complacent?**

No, it is important to monitor the effect of all changes. The fund was valued at 31 March 2001, and a further health check will be completed during the rest of this year.

5. **What would Gordon have made of it?**

We like to think that Gordon would be reassured that he would be well provided for in retirement should diesels ever take over his railway.

Should you have any queries regarding this article please contact the Pension Strategy Team on 01603 222842



If you would like 'Norfolk Agenda' in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact the Communications Unit on (01603) 222964 (minicom 223833) and we will do our best to help.

Norfolk Agenda

The newsletter for Council Staff

New Director for Social Services



Norfolk County Council has appointed Lisa Christensen as its new Director of Social Services. Ms Christensen succeeds David Wright, who retires as Director on October 31.

Ms Christensen is currently Executive

Director, Social Services and Health Improvement, with the London Borough of Lambeth. During her four years at Lambeth, the borough's social services department was successfully removed from 'special measures,' a Primary Care NHS Trust established and mental health services successfully integrated with the local Mental Health Trust.

Ms Christensen is 45, married with two daughters and is now looking forward to moving to Norfolk with her family from her home in East London.

"I am very much looking forward to the new challenge of successfully delivering services in a largely rural county like Norfolk," said Lisa Christensen.

"I am pleased to be allowed to follow on from David Wright, someone whose professionalism I have admired for many years. On a personal note, my family are delighted and excited to be moving to such a lovely part of the country - my girls immediately asked me whether this meant they could, at last, buy a second dog!"

Congratulations to Our Schools.

More Norfolk school students than ever passed their A' level and GCSE exams this year.

- 94% of all those sitting GCSEs passed with a grade A* to G, with 16.4 % of those receiving the top A* or A pass.
- More than 90% of all A' level students achieved pass grades

"I would urge everyone to celebrate with us the undoubted achievement of our young people. Our young people, teachers, schools and parents deserve our congratulations."

Said Alec Byrne, Cabinet member for Education

GO WEST!

Planning and Transportation has opened a third Highways Area Office, based at King's Lynn and serving the west of the county.



The office serves the area covered by King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council and is located at Saddlebow in King's Lynn.

West Area Manager is John Eastgate, who has been with the Council since 1983 and now manages over 70 people, who have come mainly from P&T offices and depots at Bexwell, Hillington and Watton to form the West Area team.

☎ 01553 692129 or 0845 602 1930
(charged at the local rate)

Have you got a story for the next issue?
If so phone 01603 222843, or email: christine.birchall.cex@norfolk.gov.uk

Inside this issue: Brian Gunn 'on his bike'..Retirement - your questions answered..International Resue..Saving Money by Car Share ... and lots more!



Building begins on County Hall site

On October 7th work begins at County Hall on a new building to contain both a new housing scheme for frail older people, and a 50 place nursery for children of those who work for the county council.

The loss of some 200 car parking spaces at County Hall site will be offset by the recent move by Norfolk Police to their new headquarters, which freed 270 spaces, and the move of around 70 NPS staff to other office locations around the county.

However we do know that demand for spaces regularly outstrips availability at peak times of the year, during council meetings and when we have a large number of visitors.

So we are keeping under review plans for overflow car parking at peak times

- Staff will be updated regularly about

the progress of the new housing scheme - built in partnership by Norfolk County Council, Broadland Housing Association and Norwich City Council

- More information about the County Hall nursery will be available soon for those who wish to put their children's names down for places well in advance of the opening date of late 2003, or early 2004.
- For information about public transport to County Hall or the County Council's car sharing scheme log on to www.carshare.to/carsharing.asp

For further immediate information about the building work or car parking implications contact Graham Wray, NPS Facilities Manager on ext 2554 or Peter Carpenter Facilities Officer ext 3052



On yer bike, Bryan!

Bryan Gunn was the guest of honour at a summertime Bike Try-out Roadshow, organised in partnership by our Planning and Transportation Department.

Dozens of exciting and exotic bikes were lined up, free for anyone to try, including tandems, rickshaws and recumbent and folding bikes.

Saving money (and the environment)



Ever wondered how much running your car costs?
Now you can find out in a few seconds

Liftshare have developed a calculator that works out how much you currently spend on travelling. The calculator tells you approximately:

- Total fuel costs for year
- Total annual running fees
- Cost per mile
- Cost per daily journey
- Saving a day, if you shared a daily journey
- Saving a year, if you shared a daily journey

Interested? Go to

www.carshare.to/carsharing.asp. While you're there, why not check out the links to public transport information, traffic and roadworks? - Or you could just use it to find a someone to lift share with. 1200 users a month can't be wrong...

www.carshare.to is the lift-sharing and travel information service for Norwich and Norfolk. It is joint-funded by Norfolk County and Norwich City Councils and supported by EcoTech and Norwich City College.

Alison Sayer Travel Plan Co-ordinator

The Council recently played host to 60 Eastern European students who came to England to learn about our democratic processes.

Among the services different groups visited were Planning and Transportation, where they learnt how hard it can be to build a road in this part of the world.

They had a look at computer aided design (CAD) and got to see new countryside web pages, which they can log on to back home.

A group also visited the Chief Executives department where they were amazed to learn that the County Council had responsibility for Coroners, Registrars and consumer rights.

In the Communications Unit one group wrote some of their impressions of their visit.....

" It's our first time in GB and we are happy to be here. In UK we are taking part in the international youth exchange. England, Estonia, Germany, Poland are also with us. We are from Belarus. Now there are 6 of us but in fact our group consists of 12 participants. Here we are: Katia Savitskaya, Tania Verenich, Alex Tupalsky, Yuliya Lezhankova, Tania Slavinskaya and Igor Zhigunov.

Katia Savitskaya, 20.

I'm a student of the Linguistic University. A visit to your country was my dream for many years. I've read much about the UK and in reality it's even greater than in books and pictures.

Tania Verenich, 18.

I'm a student of the Institute of Law. My future profession is international lawyer. I hope that this Exchange helps me to make new friends.

Cultural exchange



Historic message sent to our schools

The last day of term was an historic one for thousands of

Norfolk school children who all received an email from Her Majesty The Queen.

The Queen sent her largest ever group email as part of her official Jubilee visit to the County on July 18th, as she opened The Forum and The Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library.

And schools were quick to reply.

"We were delighted to receive your wonderful letter. We felt very privileged to have been written to by such an important person,"

Class 3 from Great Witchingham Primary School.

Other schools who replied straight away were Frettenham First School, Woodton Primary, Ellingham Primary, Saxlingham Nethergate Primary, Little Melton First School and Therton First School.

- All schools still have the chance to reply to the email, as the reply address will remain open until the end of the year.

Health and Safety Week October 14th

This year's Health and Safety Week starts on October 14th. The official European theme is 'Psychosocial Risks' which means work related stress and its causes. However, here in Norfolk County Council we are widening the scope of events, under the working title of 'Building Safety into our Culture', to cover other aspects of health and safety and well-being at work.

Some of the events planned for this year include:

- Free well-person clinics for NCC employees in Norwich, Attleborough, Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Cromer
- A special Health and

Safety Week supplement of 'Risk News'

- A safety climate survey to find out how well you think health and safety issues are dealt with
- The distribution of this year's Health and Safety 'Performance Monitoring Model'
- Tai' Chi, meditation and other lunchtime sessions at County Hall

For more information about what's happening in Norfolk County Council check out the special Health and Safety Week page on the Corporate Personnel intranet site.

http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/personnel_intranet/Content/default.asp

What's On

See more information about special events (some with discounts for County Council staff), items for sale or social events and add your own on the County Council's relaunched intranet 'Marketplace' <http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/discus1/default.htm>

The Comedy Store @ The Forum

Wednesday 18th September - 18+ only

Engage your laughing gear as London's famous comedy club begins a regular monthly slot at The Forum in Norwich.

Tickets £10 each, available from the Theatre Royal Box Office on 01603 63 00 00

Save the Children Family Fun day

Saturday 21st September 10 - 3pm

Join in a Guinness Book of Records attempt on the world largest finger painting.

Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library at the Forum. Also magicians, music and raffle.

International Rescue Corps looking for more F.A.B volunteers

Formed in 1981 in response to the Italian Earthquake, the Corps is a United Nations registered search and rescue team offering its services free of charge in response to global and national disasters. It is a registered charity entirely financed by donations and the fundraising efforts of it's all-volunteer members. While many of its missions have been abroad, the services and equipment of the Corps are available for domestic incidents such as searches for missing persons.

The Corps has several members employed by Norfolk County Council, presently all of whom are in the Fire Service and are grateful for the support given by Chief Fire Officer Richard Elliott and the

members of the Fire and Community Protection Review Panel. They are keen, however to attract men and women from all walks of life and their number includes paramedics, secretaries, accountants to name but a few.

Current Corps members qualified to operate overseas & employed by Norfolk County Council are -



● Paul Wooster

Joined the corps in 1985. An operational watch officer at Norwich, Paul has recently taken on a year's secondment to

work on the Government's "New Dimensions" initiative. Paul has

responded to missions in Armenia, Costa Rica, Iran, Japan, Georgia, Philippines, Nicaragua, Turkey, India and the UK. Paul is the regional training officer and national liaison and development officer for the Corps.



● Helen Farley

Joined the Corps in 1996. Helen works in Fire Service Control on Systems Support and training. Helen has

responded to missions in Turkey, Nicaragua & the UK and is the regional co-ordinator.



● Mark Wilson-North

Mark joined the Corps in 1998. Working from Norwich Station, Mark has a training and staff

function. He attended the earthquake in India and is the national stores officer.



● David Lambard

Joined the Corps in 2000. David is responsible for training and operations in the Breckland area. Only

recently qualified, David is yet to respond abroad.

The Corps most recently deployed a search team to the tragic Soham incident. They remain available to all in the hope of saving life at home and throughout the world.

For more information, visit our website www.intrescue.org, or email us at admin@intrescue.org.

Young Travellers rise to the challenge

Six teenagers are well on their way to becoming the first Travellers in the country to be awarded the bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award - with help from Norfolk County Council's Traveller Education Service.



Julie Arnold, Amy Cattano, Sharn Smith, Annemarie Draper and Stephanie and April McPhee have spent the last nine months working towards the 'Skills' part of the award. They were rewarded for all their hard work last month when the Lord Mayor of Norwich presented them with special sectional certificates.

The Traveller Education Service has supported the girls throughout, helping them complete a basic food hygiene certificate, a first aid course and 'Successful Communication' training. The girls will now work towards the next part of the award by planning an expedition and working in the community.

Caroline Henderson, their Advisory Support Teacher said, 'We are so proud of the girls. They have worked hard and shown real satisfaction and commitment.'



Book early for free advice

Retirement brings a radical change of life for most of us, and pension experts are agreed that it is essential to plan wisely. Although courses have been available for many years very few of our retirees have attended.

To address this problem, the Norfolk Pension Fund has teamed up with Corporate training & Development to offer a revamped course to all staff who expect to retire in the next 18 months.

The course will help people prepare for this major change of lifestyle by providing information on state benefits, the Local Government Pension Scheme and financial advice. Ideas for filling leisure time and health and fitness are explored. Specialist speakers deliver most sessions with ample time set aside for your questions and concerns.

The course lasts two days and is free to all

employees of Norfolk County Council. (Non NCC employees who are in the Local Government Pension Scheme may attend with a small charge being made for the optional second day).

To demonstrate commitment to the course, the previous Pension Manager volunteered to test the quality of the course. He found the financial advice so enlightening he retired and never came back!

A limited number of places remain at the forthcoming pre-retirement seminars:

31st October & 1st November,

16th & 17th December

9th & 10th January

18th & 19th February

27th & 28th March

Phone 01603 223805 to book places

A New Code of Conduct

A new Code of Conduct governing the behaviour of Councillors, which meets national guidelines, has now been adopted by Members of the Authority.

Under the Code, Councilors must:

- Promote equality by not discriminating against any person
- Treat others with respect
- Ensure Council resources are not used for political purposes -unless linked to the discharge of County Council duties
- When reaching decisions, have regard to relevant legal and financial advice
- Refer to the Standards Board any behaviour of a Councillor which they do not consider complies with the Code

Councillors, must not:

- Disclose confidential information, unless required to do so by law
- Prevent others from having access to information to which they are entitled by law
- Behave in such a way as to bring the County Council into disrepute
- Use their position as a member in an improper manner so as to confer or secure an advantage or disadvantage for themselves or others
- Compromise the impartiality of County Council employees or representatives.

All **personal interests** must be declared. Personal interests are defined widely and, for example, include the situation where a Councillor, relatives or friends will be made richer or poorer by a particular decision.

If the personal interest is also a prejudicial interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting.

A Councillor with a personal interest in a matter also has a **prejudicial interest** if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgment of the public interest.

The Code requires Councillors to register a range of personal financial, and land owning interests as well as membership of other bodies.

- Contact Keir Hounsom, Head of Law and Monitoring Officer (telephone: 01603 223415) if you would like further information.



My Kingdom for a Norse?

Staff who took part in June's UK and Ireland Corporate Games Dragon Boat race caught in mid-paddle without their Viking helmets.

Sept 2002

e-government update

21st century services

One of the council's top aims is to improve our services and make it easier for people to get access to them in what ever way people choose to get in touch - face to face, by letter, e mail, fax on the phone or through the Internet.

As one part of this aim, we are committed to giving people the choice of getting as many services as possible electronically by 2004 - this means for example, by email, phone or the Internet. The work to make this happen is our e-government programme.

It will also mean that staff will have the information they need to help them deliver a better service.

E- normous programme for new Chief Officer.

Alan Tidmarsh is to head Norfolk County Council's drive towards e-government, after full Council agreed to establish a new chief officer post to oversee our E-government programme.



In a report to Council Chief Executive, Tim Byles, said that the task of giving direction to the e-government programme was too large and complex to be added to an

existing chief officer's duties, and could not be undertaken by anyone less senior.

In his role as e-Service Director Alan will:

- Manage the Capita contract
- Manage the Client Support Group
- Manage the implementation of the new contact centre
- Manage the financial implications of the e-government programme
- Co-ordinate the whole e government programme including the FIMs and PIMs projects
- Manage the central service transformation function
- Be the County Council's e-government champion.
- Work closely with Derek Turnbull, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs.

The vacant post of Director of Corporate Resources will be advertised internally in the first instance.

- A special 4 page insert about Norfolk County Council's e-government programme will feature in every edition of Norfolk Agenda from now on
- Regular e government update bulletins will be emailed to staff
- Look out for a special e-government Intranet site for latest information, general discussion and questions and answers.



e - volving into a new type of authority

Making changes under our overall e-government programme involves a series of connected projects over the coming years.

So the programme is being planned in stages to help us:

- Deliver the services that people need and expect - a more customer focused approach
- Meet national targets imposed by the Government
- Meet the special 'enhanced' targets we have agreed with the Government that will bring us a large financial reward if we achieve them.

We will do our best to keep people informed of plans and progress and make sure that opportunities for questions, discussion and consultation are built in all along the way.

The proposed new Contact Centre

The proposal to have a new contact centre is one part of a wider contact strategy that was approved by Cabinet earlier this year.

- **What will a contact centre do?**

The proposals would see trained contact centre staff handle customer contacts to us by phone, email

and possibly letter. It is probable that the centre will be in a building close to County Hall.

Calls would go through to specially trained staff who would have on their terminals all the information they needed to answer most general customer enquiries. More detailed calls would be put through to specialist NCC staff.

For our customers it will mean much simpler phone/internet or e-mail access and faster responses.

It will end the passing of people from pillar to post which happens now on occasions and mean that they need to give their details only once for records to be maintained.

For staff it will mean that knowledge and information must be more widely shared and accessible - helping people to do their jobs better and dealing with fewer customers frustrated by delays in answering etc.

If the contact centre proposal is agreed, it would mean that a centre would be up and running by March 2004 at the latest.

- **Transfers in stages**

We need to transfer work in stages as we improve our systems and Information Technology and knowledge and information networks.

In all departments, Service Chief Officers will lead more work with the relevant staff teams to identify and plan for any changes and make sure that they deliver real improvements.

Some jobs will change and others will be affected by change. As work

progresses, we will become clearer about which they will be. Where jobs do change, we promise to work with all the people concerned in respect of their interests and opportunities for the future.

Sitting at the centre of our web

As part of our e improvements we need to improve and update our internet and intranet sites, incorporating good practice that exists at present.

To help us do this, this month we are advertising for a new Web Manager to join the corporate communications team and develop and manage the council's Web sites. Interviews will take place in October.

Work to develop a proposal about new ways of managing and co-ordinating our Web and Intranet presence is being led by an inter-departmental group. Their report will go to COG for discussion and then to Cabinet for approval in the autumn.

e-government champions

If you want to know more at this stage, or have concerns you want to discuss, you can contact your departmental e-champion

Name	Department
Sheila Bullard	Cultural Services
Louise Chittock	NPS
Howard Collins	Chief Executive's
David Worsley	Norfolk Fire Service
Paul Fisher	Education
Vincent Gilbert	Planning & Transportation (Highways)
Michael Gleeson	Chief Executive's (Trading Standards)
Amanda Gray	Planning & Transportation
Paul Hoey	Education
Karen Knight	Social Services
Mandy Knowlton-Rayner	Finance
Carol Lock	Social Services
John Neilson	Finance
Karen Palframan	Norfolk Fire Service



New financial system becomes a reality!

As part of our e-government programme, it has been agreed to install a new Financial Information Management System (FIMS). Our need for financial management information has got increasingly sophisticated over the years and we have known for a long time that our current system is not up to the job.

Work to improve things - the FIMS project - has been going on for many months but the good news is that the decision has now been taken. We are aiming to begin implementing the new system in April 2003 and have it complete by the early autumn 2003.

With FIMS about to begin its implementation phase, we thought you might like to meet the core team working on it.



Suzanne Sowter is project manager and works to the Head of Financial Management.



Tony Howard is working on the general ledger and budgeting.

Carol Dawson and Sarah Rank



are working on billing, income collection and debt management, with Sarah concentrating on Social Services.

Doris Piper provides administrative support to the project.



The core team is part of the much bigger team involved in the project.

This comprises representatives from all departments, who are kept abreast of progress each week, and whose input will be needed at critical stages.

The new team is based in the Norfolk Room County Hall.



Alan Chappell covers payments and purchasing, working closely with the Corporate Purchasing Unit.

Departmental contacts are:

Chief Exec's Julie Berry
Cultural Services John Perrott
Education Bruce Connors
Fire Chris Sims

P&T Mel Edwards
Social Services John Marjoram
Chief Exec's
(Trading Standards) Michelle Brasier

