

Centre of attention

Our Customer Service Centre is now up and running, with specially trained staff helping you with your enquiries, often without the need to pass you through to departments.

The Centre is making it easier for you to contact us, with the first person you speak to aiming to give you all the information and advice you need. We are also using fewer numbers for groups of services, so it will be clearer which number you need to call for help.

Whether you have a question or need advice about Trading Standards or Social Services, you can get through to a member of staff who will be happy to help you on one of the following numbers:

Trading Standards
0844 800 8013

Social Services
0844 800 8014

There's no music playing while you are put on hold and no numbered options to choose from - just a helpful member of staff waiting to help you with your enquiry.

Intran SUCCESS

Thirty new interpreters celebrated success in gaining professional qualifications through the Norfolk County Council-led **INTRAN** project this month.

In a county where 52 different languages are spoken by small and geographically diverse populations, the **INTRAN** project brings together statutory and voluntary agencies to fund a translation and interpretation service free to users who are deaf or whose first language isn't English.

Thanks to a successful funding bid made to EEDA (East of England Development Agency), this year **INTRAN** has trained interpreters speaking Portugese, Sylehti, Albanian, Russian, Mandarin, French, Spanish and Turkish, from local communities to successfully complete their Diploma in Public Services Interpreting qualification. No other DPSI training exists in the eastern counties.

Sprowston park&ride

Norwich's latest Park & Ride, providing nearly 800 parking spaces and a bus service from Sprowston to the city centre, is now open.

The £2 million Sprowston scheme is the fourth Park & Ride to be built by Norfolk County Council to ease congestion and pressure on parking in Norwich - and work on the fifth, off the A140 Ipswich road at Harford, is already well underway.



Sprowston Park & Ride is reached from new roundabout on the A1151 Wroxham Road, close to Sprowston Manor.

The bus service will be run by Norfolk County Services Ltd using brand-new low-floor

Buses serving the site will operate from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm, running every 8 minutes at peak times and every 10 minutes during the rest of the day. In the run-up to Christmas the service will also operate on Thursday evenings and on Sundays.

- Work on the fifth Park & Ride serving Norwich is well underway at Harford, south of Norwich, and the site for a Cringleford Park & Ride has been secured by the County Council. Construction is planned for next year, funds permitting.
- Information about Park & Ride, including opening times and charges, can be found on the County Council Passenger Transport Unit's website at: www.passengertransport.norfolk.gov.uk/publictransport/parkandride.htm

If you would like 'Norfolk Matters' in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the Communications Unit on (01603) 222972 (minicom 223833)



Norfolk Matters

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Budget consultation

Norfolk County Council is giving all Norfolk residents the chance to help shape council services - and influence the level of Council Tax - over the next three years.

The Council has a responsibility to improve the lives of Norfolk people, either directly, through its services, or by working with other authorities and organisations that make up the County Strategic Partnership, whose vision for the future is set out in '**Norfolk Ambition**' (see issue 9 of *Norfolk Matters*).

The County Council's Cabinet has already identified 42 areas for improvement with ten priorities for the next three years. To find out whether Norfolk people agree with these priorities a county-wide consultation is being launched, principally through '**Your Norfolk**', the County Council's magazine that is distributed to every household.

The questionnaire, which is also available online at www.norfolk.gov.uk asks people whether services have got better or worse over the last five years, and asks them to indicate which of the ten future priorities they think are most important, and which are least important.



The ten priority issues are:

- Protecting children from abuse and neglect
- Helping all children reach their full potential
- Improving educational achievements and the quality of school buildings
- Supporting older people to live safe and independent lives in their own homes
- Improving transport links to help business and jobs
- Reducing waste and improving how we recycle it
- Supporting families and keeping them together wherever possible
- Reducing crime and disorder especially among younger people
- Reducing deprivation in rural and urban areas
- Making sure people are easily able to get the County Council services they need.

The consultation also provides an opportunity to say which one service more money should be spent on - bearing in mind the effect on Council Tax - and any service where less should be spent.

Alison King, Leader of Norfolk County Council, said: "Last year the increase in Council Tax was far higher than anyone would have liked. Our Government funding left us well short of what we needed.

"We want to improve our services, but our budget is still under pressure and we recognise the difficulty that recent steep Council Tax rises have caused. It is therefore essential that we plan carefully and make sure that our priorities are right. People can help us to do this by giving us their views."

Responses are being gathered by MORI, the independent market research agency, and those received by the end of November will be included in a report to Cabinet on December 15th.



photo courtesy
of EDP

Thurlton Primary is the first school in Norfolk to have its own wind turbine. The 6.5KW, 9.5m high turbine has been built as part of the 'Classrooms of the Future' scheme jointly funded by the County Council, and the Department for Education and Skills, with a contribution from NPS Property Consultants Ltd.

Integrated RISK Management

People are to be asked for their views over the next few months on how an improved fire service could be provided in Norfolk in the years ahead.

After going to the County Council's Cabinet for approval, a draft version of Norfolk's first-ever **'Integrated Risk Management Plan'** will be available for comment. The public, stakeholders and staff will have until the end of January to

comment on the proposals. Cabinet will consider these comments before a final decision is taken in March.

The 130 plus page document, drawn up following a careful assessment by senior fire officers of fire risks in Norfolk, suggests a number of important changes to the way in which fire cover is provided and a range of exciting fire safety developments.

It follows the Government's White Paper *"Our Fire and Rescue Service"* which sets out its vision of a modernised fire service which is

more pro active in preventing fires, and in reducing loss of life in fires and accidents.

As part of the initiative, senior fire officers have looked at the existing fire cover across Norfolk and concluded that in many areas, including King's Lynn, there is no need to change existing arrangements.

However, in some areas, they have concluded that the service to the people of Norfolk could be improved. More details will be given in the next edition of Norfolk Matters.

A Better Future for Older People in Norfolk



For the first time ever there are more older people living in Norfolk than young people. More than a quarter of the county's population are now 60 plus.

Norfolk County Council provides social services for more than 13,500 older people every week, and that number is sure to increase.

The County Council is taking a fresh look at services for older people and aims to have a draft Strategy For Older People ready for consultation by the end of the year. Individuals and groups like the Older People Forum and Age Concern Norfolk will then be able to have their say.

In developing the draft strategy the County Council is looking at:

- Services that help people retain their independence and live in their own home - home care, day care, meals on wheels, adaptations to people's homes;
- Services for people who can no longer live at home - housing with care schemes, residential and nursing care including mental health care, reablement and rehabilitation;
- The way these social services link with other services, such as transport and lifelong learning;
- Services provided in partnership with health trusts, the voluntary and private sector.

What is...?

Housing with care

Individual flats within a bigger complex with range of communal facilities. Full care and support available 24 hours a day. For very dependent people who can no longer live at home.

Residential care

Individual or shared rooms within residential home. Full care and support available 24 hours a day. For very dependent people who can no longer live at home.

Nursing care

Individual or shared rooms within nursing home. Full care and support available 24 hours a day. For very dependent people who can no longer live at home and who have serious health needs.

Day Care

Ranges from lunch clubs to activities at day centres - provided by Norfolk County Council and voluntary organisations.

Home care

Care provided in your own home - eg getting dressed, washed

Respite care

Short term stay in a care home to give your carer a break

Reablement care

Care to relearn basic skills (eg cooking) after a stay in hospital/serious illness etc

NATS consultation

The most comprehensive transport consultation ever carried out

- Priority for different modes of transport in different areas (for example to pedestrians and cyclists in the city centre)
- Improvements at key road junctions to improve traffic flow
- Better public transport, including a possible new Park & Ride site at Taverham/Drayton (A1067)
- Investigation into a Light Rapid Transit system - trams
- Measures to reduce through traffic in the city centre, residential side streets and suburban and rural roads around the north of Norwich

Although not part of the preferred strategy, views on congestion charging or workplace parking charges in the city centre are also being sought.

If there is public support for an NDR, the County Council's Cabinet could select a preferred route next Spring, with a planning application made in the Autumn of 2004. There would be a public inquiry and the earliest possible start for construction is likely to be in 2006.

How to find out more ..

Search the consultation pages on www.norwichareatransport.org.

Call the NATS consultation helpline on 01603 223113 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Send queries by e-mail to norwich.transport@norfolk.gov.uk



in Norwich and the surrounding area is now underway.

Public views are essential in shaping a new **Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS)** for the next 20 years. People are being asked to comment upon a **'preferred strategy'**, developed for consultation by Norfolk County Council with Broadland District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk Council.

Around **130,000** leaflets and questionnaires have been distributed to homes and businesses, and this is backed up by a programme of exhibitions and public meetings.

People can also go on-line to www.norwichareatransport.org to find out much more about the Strategy, get details of the public meetings and exhibitions. There is also an electronic version of the questionnaire.

The consultation runs until December 13th. Initial feedback will be available in the Spring of 2004, and the aim is to publish a draft Strategy in the Autumn.

Among the ideas for consultation are:

- Construction of a new Northern Distributor Road (NDR), with a choice of routes

DID YOU KNOW

Norfolk County Council provides

Housing with care, residential and nursing home care to around 5,000 people

Day care for nearly 5,000 people

Respite care and subsidised holidays - 5,500 stays a year

Meals on wheels to 2,000 people every week

Home care for about 6,100 people every week

Equipment / adaptations to property - 10,000 people every year

Archive Centre Opening

The new £6.7 million Archive Centre built next to County Hall, Norwich, opens to the public at the end of October.

As well as providing a new state of the art home for the Norfolk Record Office, it also houses the new Norfolk Sound Archive and the East Anglian Film Archive.



The project is a partnership between Norfolk County Council, the University of East Anglia and the Heritage Lottery Fund who awarded it a £4.2 million grant.

The public facilities for access are outstanding, including an exhibition gallery, learning suite for the Centre's lifelong learning programmes, and public searchrooms for the Record Office, Film Archive and the Sound Archive.

Schools organisation

Consultation with parents of children at 90 schools in and around Norwich is underway on the best way to reorganise schools so that transfer at high school is at the age of 11.

The County Council has already agreed the principle of changing to this system, where the ages of transfer are in line with National Curriculum Key Stages. Currently, much of the area has first and middle schools, with transfer to high school at 12.

30,000 consultation papers have been sent out to schools under review for distribution to parents, but the consultation is open anyone else interested in helping to shape the future educational system in the area. Copies of the leaflet are available in libraries, and it is also available on the County Council website www.norfolk.gov.uk in the "have your say" section.

Matters in the consultation include:

- views about whether an all through primary school or a combination of infant and junior schools would be better in an area.
- how is it best to provide early years and childcare opportunities in local communities
- how to make more use of schools for the community and build on the latest thinking about "extended schools."
- how to encourage more 16 year olds to stay on in education. In the Norwich area the percentage of pupils who remain in full time education beyond the age of 16 is lower than elsewhere in Norfolk, and Norfolk is lower than the national average.

The consultation closes on 1 December. Responses will then be analysed and discussed by county councillors, before members of the County Cabinet make the final decision about how best to organise schools in the future. This decision is likely to be made in January 2004. Proposals would then be taken to the independent Schools Organisation Committee, at around Easter 2004. The earliest date that changes could happen would be September 2006.

School race equality awards

Fifteen 'Norfolk Flagship' schools have been chosen for the promotion of race equality. The award recognises the schools progress in implementing the 'Learning for All' project, which is the Commission for Racial Equality's standard for race equality within schools. The schools are:

All Saints CE Primary School, Great Ryburgh.
Chapel Break First School, Norwich.
City of Norwich School.
Diss High School
Diss Infants & Nursery Community School.
Dowson First School, Norwich.
Hethersett High School.
Lyng CE Primary School, Norwich.

Manor Field First & Nursery School, Long Stratton.
Notre Dame High School, Norwich.
Old Buckenham Community Primary School, Attleborough.
Parkside School, Norwich.
Thurton Primary School, Norwich.
Wensum Middle School, Norwich.
West Earham Middle School, Norwich.

...Forward Plan.....Forward Plan.....Forward

Each month the Council publishes a forward plan of key decisions expected to be taken during the following twelve months. This is updated every month. The plan can be viewed on the County Council's website, www.norfolk.gov.uk. Cabinet's decisions are posted on the internet in the 'Committee Papers' section.

Issues considered by Cabinet on October 13th

Modernising Hospital Social Work

Contact Graham Robinson 01603 223435

graham.robinson@norfolk.gov.uk

Fairer Charging (Social Services)

Contact Jacqui Lomas 01603 223438

jacqui.lomas@norfolk.gov.uk

Direct Payments to Adults and Children Living at Home

Contact Graham Robinson 01603 223435

graham.robinson@norfolk.gov.uk

HIV / AIDS Support Grant

Contact Laurie A'Court on 01603 222886

laurie.acourt@norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk Schools Private Finance Initiative Project - The Market Towns

Contact Matthew Rathbone 01603 222469

matthew.rathbone@norfolk.gov.uk

Building Schools for the Future - Approval to submit a bid for Government funding

Contact Anna Davidson on 01603 223050

anna.davidson@norfolk.gov.uk

Proposed Integrated Risk Management Plan - draft report for approval as the basis for public consultation

Contact Paul Hayden, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
01603 810351

Crime & Disorder Policy Framework

Contact Jon Shalom 01603 - 222281

jon.shalom@norfolk.gov.uk

Or Peter Burnham 01603 224490

peter.burnham@norfolk.gov.uk

For consideration by Cabinet on November 24th

Thetford Southern Link Road - update report

Contact Philip Wishart- Group Manager (Roads)
01603 223461

phil.wishart@norfolk.gov.uk

Best Value Review on Supportive Living

Tim O' Mullane on 01603 223157

tim.omullane@norfolk.gov.uk

For consideration in December or January

Waste Local Plan - Draft Consultation

Contact Berni Marfleet Acting Head of Planning
and Transport Strategy, on 01603 222592

berni.marfleet@norfolk.gov.uk

Review of Day Services for people with Learning Difficulties in Norfolk. Review to be carried out by the National Development Team

Contact Amanda Reynolds, Director of Learning
Disabilities on 01603 223960

amanda.reynolds@norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk County Council's Preferred Approach to Waste - Contract Strategy and Funding Options

Contact Simon Pomfret - Project Manager (Waste)
01603 223253

simon.pomfret@norfolk.gov.uk

Early Years Development and Childcare Plan 2004- 2005

Contact Marcelle Curtis on 01603 224386

marcelle.curtis@norfolk.gov.uk

The Norfolk Older People Strategy

Contact Harold Bodmer, Assistant Director
(Community Care) on 01603 223175

harold.bodmer.socs@norfolk.gov.uk

New Bus Station for Norwich

Exciting plans to build a state-of-the-art £4.1 million bus station in the heart of Norwich have finally been revealed to the public.

The new bus station will have spaces for 12 bus and four long-distance coaches; a new travel office with seating, toilets and vending facilities; covered racks for cyclists and improved access for pedestrians.

The new station will also cut bus journey times through the city centre because buses will be able to enter and leave it from Surrey Street and from Queen's Road rather than the one-way system used at present.

Members of Norfolk County Council's Cabinet approved the scheme drawn up by NPS Property Consultants Ltd on September 15 and a period of public consultation is underway.

A decision on the plans will be taken by the County Council in December, allowing the existing bus station to be closed and demolished early next year and the new station open by March 2005.

Your Library Service

Norfolk County Council has re-affirmed its commitment to the County's mobile libraries following an extensive review of the service used by thousands of people each week.

Norfolk has a total of 13 public service mobile libraries visiting over 2,000 stops around the county. In addition, there are four vehicles that visit residential homes.

The review included consultation with the public, library staff and district councils. A number of recommendations have been made including:

Increasing the frequency of some of the four weekly visits to visits every three weeks;

Appointing a manager to oversee the whole mobile library operation;

Adoption of Mobile Library Service standards which include stopping times and distance between stops;

Adjustment of routes and vehicle bases to reduce duplication;

Extension of the role of mobile libraries in providing a service to housebound people, in partnership with the WRVS.

Further consultation on the type of books carried on mobile libraries is also recommended.

The Library & Information Service has stressed that whatever changes are developed as a result of the review, there are no proposals to cut the service or plans to adversely affect users.

Extra opening

hours will be in force at every public library in Norfolk by the end of October as part of a £440,000 initiative to offer an improved service to readers across the county.

Late night and weekend openings are becoming available at many of Norfolk's libraries for the first time and Sunday opening is being pioneered at Gaywood library in King's Lynn from October 26 onwards.

The changes were introduced at most libraries at the start of September. Thetford library will be the last to see the extra hours introduced from October 27 because of staffing issues.

Each library has consulted with users about how to use the extra hours to best effect and consultation forms were also put into places such as doctors surgeries, community halls, playgroups and other local groups to try to gauge the views of non-library users.

Members of the public can view how opening hours have changed at their local library by visiting www.norfolk.gov.uk click on Leisure and then on Libraries. Opening hours for branch libraries are on the front page of the Libraries section.



Focus upon NPS Property Consultants Ltd

In the ten years since Norfolk County Council's property services department first dipped its toe into the competitive world of property management, the distinctive NPS logo has spread far beyond the county boundary.

After starting life as a County Council 'business unit' - set up in 1993 to meet the requirement for council property services to be opened up to competition - Norfolk Property Services became a private limited company in 1994 and last year became a wholly-owned limited company of Norfolk County Council and was re-named NPS Property Consultants Ltd.

The change in name reflects the company's success in securing major clients outside the county, including the county councils in Essex, Surrey, and East Sussex, the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, Luton Borough Council, district councils, housing associations, the Broads Authority, NHS Trusts, independent schools and colleges, and even the Government's Department for Education and Skills.

NPS now employs over 350 people working from offices as far afield as Lewes.

Managing Director Mike Britch points out that this success is of more than academic interest here in Norfolk.

"At its simplest, it's good news for Council Tax payers because they are paying less for essential property services. What's more there's the potential of dividend windfalls for the County Council, and the value of NPS itself has grown."

"But there are also other benefits in terms of the depth of experience and quality of staff we have been able to attract and retain. Our success has been built upon the expertise and professionalism of our

staff - people who, frankly, might very well have been tempted elsewhere if NPS had not expanded its horizons in the way it has."

Other tangible benefits arise directly from NPS' work with different authorities and agencies within Norfolk, providing opportunities for property rationalisations and partnerships - the development of

Housing with Care schemes for elderly people, for example, and proposals for a single point of access in Gt Yarmouth for the County Council, Borough Council and Primary Care Trust.

Less tangible is the raised profile for Norfolk through the success of NPS, which is regarded as being at the leading edge of property consultancy - so much so that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has

been inquiring about NPS' strength in developing and maintaining strong and effective partnerships.

NPS' experience, combined with a determination to pursue new construction industry initiatives, is certainly one of the reasons why Norfolk County Council has become a Beacon Authority for Rethinking Construction.



Property Consultants Ltd

