

Norfolk Matters

The Newsletter of Norfolk County Council



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Tighter **budget** for 04-05

A budget of £739.6 million and a Council Tax increase of 5.75 per cent has been set by Norfolk County Council. This decision will mean an increase of 97 pence a week for a band "D" Council Tax payer.



Council Leader Alison King said she had listened to the views of Norfolk residents and so the County Council would be tightening its belt to keep the Council Tax increase at a lower level than originally proposed.

"This is a budget for services and people, for improvement and progress. On the one hand, it reflects

our commitment to do better for Norfolk and Norfolk people. On the other, it delivers a much lower level of Council Tax increase and better value for money."

Mrs King said the Council would continue to press for change in the way local government is funded:

"We are handicapped by the funding system which sees the Government tip the scales against us before we even start. The Council Tax system and local government funding is outdated and in need of complete overhaul."

In spite of the difficulties, the County Councils' 2004-05 budget will allow improvements in key areas of service including more than £20 million extra each for Education and Social Services. Other important features of the budget include:

- **Passing to schools the full increase in Government education funding**



The Queen pictured with County Archivist John Alban has given Norfolk's prestigious £6.7 million Archive Centre the royal seal of approval. The Archive Centre - Western Europe's most advanced archive facility - houses more than 12 million documents, sound archives and films. The Centre, in the County Hall grounds, Norwich, is a partnership between Norfolk County Council, the UEA and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It first opened to the public in November.

- **The replacement of at least 30 mobile classrooms with permanent buildings**
- **Providing the services and support to allow over 300 more older people stay safely in their homes**
- **Increasing the numbers of child protection workers**
- **Building a new Park and Ride site in Cringleford**
- **Beginning work on access improvements to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital**

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- **Building a new Bus Station for Norwich**
- **Providing funding to enable Community Transport to continue**
- **Replacing firefighters' breathing equipment, bringing in 6 new fire appliances including a new Emergency Tender for West Norfolk, updating firefighters' breathing equipment and starting work on a new fire station in West Norwich**
- **Starting work on a new library for Dereham, refurbishing 8-9 libraries and**

replacing the two oldest mobile library vehicles

- **Supporting regeneration projects in Gt. Yarmouth and the Nar Ouse area in King's Lynn, and the Outer Harbour (EastPort) in Gt.Yarmouth**
- **Assisting the creation of an Engineering Centre of Excellence in Norfolk**
- **Continuing to improve services to customers through the Customer Service Centre, and new local joint information centres in Gorleston and Gt.Yarmouth.**



Under Age Sales

A campaign against the illegal sale of goods such as knives, alcohol and tobacco to under-age young people has been launched by the County Council's Trading Standards department.

The 'Minor Sales, Major Consequences' campaign - funded through a £76,000 grant from the Home Office - involves enforcement of the law through test purchasing; information and advice to retailers and education through discussions at Norfolk schools, internet chat room debate, and a DVD produced by teenagers.

Traders are being encouraged to keep a log of incidents where they have refused to sell products to youngsters.

For further information contact Susan Lambert, Project Manager, on 01603 222686 or email susan.lambert@norfolk.gov.uk

Opportunities for women

A range of free courses and other services are available to women through WEETU, the Women's Employment, Enterprise and Training Unit.

Courses include:

- Choosing the way, Self-confidence, Next steps, Self employment, Work experience.

Courses are available in Norwich and at other venues around the county.

To find out more call 01603 216185.

Other free services to women include drop-in advice on careers, job search and training held at the Learning Shop in the Forum, Norwich.

Confidential information, advice and guidance is also available over the phone.

Park&Ridecharges

New Park & Ride Charges came into force in February

Airport/Postwick/Harford/Sprowston

Return trip for up to 8 People

(up to 5 of these adults):

Park Before 0900 £2.50

Park After 0900 £2.75

Six Day ticket £11.00

Monthly ticket £39.00, Yearly ticket £360.00

Costessey Park & Ride is operated as a commercial service by First

Return fares to city centre: £1.50 adults, £1.10 Up to 8 people (max five adults) can travel for £2.50.

Success for Norfolk fire reduction schemes

Two major initiatives launched in Norfolk to reduce the risk of death and injury from fire in the home are proving hugely successful.



In November the County Council's Fire Service and Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council pioneered a scheme to train technical officers from the authority's housing department to carry out home fire risk assessments during their twice-yearly property inspections. This scheme has proved a success in identifying and improving the safety of homes most at risk from fire.

'It is estimated that over 6,000 of the association's homes will benefit.'

In February the Fire Service and Peddars Way Housing Association, a member of Flagship Housing Group, announced a similar project to train Peddars Way staff in Home Fire Risk Assessments throughout its housing stock as part of a series of measures to reduce fire deaths and injuries. Advice will also be given on where to fit smoke detectors, which will be bought by Peddars Way for installation during this year. It is estimated that over 6,000 of the association's homes will benefit.

It is hoped that the success of these schemes will encourage other councils and housing associations to work in a similar way in the near future. Anyone who would like a free home fire risk assessment or advice on fire prevention in the home please should contact:

Freephone: 0800 917 8137 or e-mail: community.safety@fire.norfolk.gov.uk

Mental Health Services Set to Integrate

A new partnership which will see mental health services across most of Norfolk and part of Suffolk provided by a single organisation is set to be launch this spring.

Norfolk Mental Health Care NHS Trust will be the lead for the new integrated service which will cover most of Norfolk and Waveney but not West Norfolk, where services have already integrated with West Norfolk Primary Care Trust.

Your Norfolk, your say!

Thousands of postcards and consultation packs have been sent out asking for the views of Norfolk people, organisations and authorities on the way our county should develop over the next 20 years.

All town and parish councils and high schools should have received a consultation pack, but anyone can obtain one by calling 0844 800 8020. Comments can be made in writing and sent to Freepost Norfolk Ambition. Another easy way to register your views and order materials is by logging on to www.norfolkambition.gov.uk. The consultation closes on April 30th.

Roots of Norfolk

Roots of Norfolk has brought out a 2004 Museum Education programme - the first time that a comprehensive guide to educational work at the museum has been produced.

During 2004 over 12,000 children visited the museum which can provide curriculum based activities for all ages from pre-school to post 16.

To be sent a copy of this year's programme call 01362 869253 or email gressenhall.museum@norfolk.gov.uk

Medicine Support Service Launched

A new service to help older people take their medication has been launched by the County Council and Norfolk's Primary Care Trusts.

The Norfolk Medicines Support Service, managed by the Council's social services department, will provide:

- Trained careworkers to help administer medication
- Referral to GP for changes to medication
- Large print or extra labels
- Medication supplied weekly in a multi-compartment pack
- Easy-open lids
- Bottle-opening devices, eye drop and inhaler aids
- Medication reminder chart

Relatives, carers, social workers and health professionals can refer people who need the service.

Pharmacies and GP surgeries should have referral forms or they are available from Ian Charles at Norfolk County Council on

01603 223244.

Older people's strategy

People in Norfolk are being asked to give their views on the County Council's draft Older People Strategy.

A series of workshops, which will help shape the final strategy, are being held at various locations during April.

The strategy is looking at how services for older people should be developed over the next 5-10 years.

Harold Bodmer, head of community care at Norfolk County Council, said: "As the older population increases we've got to adapt and plan ahead. We need to look at how services can help people to stay as independent as possible."

For a copy of the strategy summary consultation document call 0844 800 8020 (textphone 01603 223242 for people who have hearing problems). Or go to **www.norfolk.gov.uk** click on 'Social Care', then 'Older People'.

There are workshops being held in Norwich, Gorleston, Attleborough, King's Lynn, Cromer and Thorpe St Andrew. To sign up to one of the workshops, phone 0844 800 8020 for an application form.

The closing date is Monday March 22.

Plans for New Demonstration Centre

The County Council is working with the Norfolk Multiple Sclerosis Society and health services on plans for an equipment Demonstration Centre as part of a county-wide service offering information and advice on the vast range of equipment available for disabled and older people. There are also plans for a local centre in Great Yarmouth involving the County Council, Borough Council, Great Yarmouth Primary Care Trust and the Red Cross.

Fairer Charging

New maximum care charges for people in housing with care schemes will be phased in, the County Council's Cabinet has decided.

The changes will bring housing with care charges in line with home care charges, set under the Government's Fairer Charging guidance. They will mainly affect people with significant savings, less than a quarter of the 350 residents. Some 85 people have already seen their care charges drop and now pay nothing.

From April, housing with care residents with savings over £20,000 will pay a maximum weekly care charge of £100 from April, and from April 2005 this will rise to £195 plus inflation. This figure represents the average cost of providing care, available 24 hours a day. Until now, the maximum rate has been £38, with the County Council effectively subsidising people, including those with significant savings.

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

The County Council's Forward Plan is updated at the start of each month to show matters which are likely to be the subject of key decisions in the next 12 months.

The plan, which can be viewed online at www.norfolk.gov.uk/council/forwardplan, outlines each subject, gives details of any consultation arrangements, when and where the decision is expected to be taken, and a contact name.

Items coming to Cabinet on March 29th include:

Learning Difficulties Employment Strategy

Consultation has taken place with people with learning difficulties across Norfolk

The plan and action plan have been shared with carers, service providers, people who use the service, commissioners and other stakeholders.

Contact

Marcia Derbyshire on 01603-223193,
marcia.derbyshire@norfolk.gov.uk.

Integration of Occupational Therapy Equipment Services

Contact

Sarah Ellis 01603 224216,
sarah.ellis@norfolk.gov.uk

Great Yarmouth ExcellenceCluster

- Submission of outline plan to DfES for transformation from the Education Action Zone to the Excellence Cluster

Contact

Mike Shenstone 01603 223475,
mike.shenstone@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 01603 223960
amanda.reynolds@norfolk.gov.uk

NCC's Preferred Approach to Waste Contact

Simon Pomfret, Project Manager, 01603 223253
simon.pomfret@norfolk.gov.uk

Voluntary partnership working

-Citizens Advice Bureaux Funding

Contact

Steve Holland 01603 223429
steve.holland@norfolk.gov.uk

Early Years Development and Childcare Plan 2004- 2005

Contact

Marcelle Curtis 01603 224386
marcelle.curtis@norfolk.gov.uk

At later spring Cabinet meetings:

Northern Distributor Route: Outcome of Consultation

Contact

Charles Auger 01603 223258,
charles.auger@norfolk.gov.uk

Norwich Area Transport Strategy

Contact

John Skillings, 01603 223316,
john.skillings@norfolk.gov.uk

Harriet Court Opens in Norwich

A new housing with care complex has opened in Norwich offering superb facilities and care for up to 40 vulnerable older people. Every tenant at Harriet Court in Lakenham has their own flat plus a range of other facilities they can use like communal lounges, a restaurant, shop, hairdresser, extra care unit and gardens. Intensive care is available 24 hours a day. The development is a partnership involving Norfolk County Council Social Services, Broadland Housing Association, and Norwich City Council. More information about the county's housing with care schemes can be found at www.norfolk.gov.uk/social/residential/hwc.htm

Peter Hawes, Managing Director of Norfolk County Services Ltd (NCS), has a team of over 4,500 staff who look after 1700 customers and bring in an annual turnover of £43,000,000.

The County Council set up NCS as a commercial business in 1988 to provide catering, cleaning, printing and grounds maintenance in Norfolk and beyond. Initially it operated as a council department, but NCS is now a limited company, entirely owned by the County Council.



The team delivers services for public and private sector organisations throughout Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. They have two major public sector contracts with North Norfolk District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council, which contribute some 25% of the business.

A 10-year partnership was established with North Norfolk District Council in 1999. Its success paved the way for a similar partnership with Great Yarmouth Borough Council, launched last October and managed by an NCS subsidiary. The Yarmouth partnership is responsible for grounds maintenance, leisure facilities, street cleansing and, a new activity for NCS, refuse collection and recycling. Recycling interests have been further developed as NCS is now working with Norfolk Environmental Waste Services at the Costessey recycling plant.

Most of Peter Hawes' staff are part-time and employed with pension rights, which gives NCS the edge of over its competitors. He is justifiably proud of the role that his company plays in providing local employment, contributing to the rural economy and saving council taxpayers money. "We track how much cheaper we are than the next lowest bidder on all our contracts. In the current financial year we will save the County Council £2.02 million. Our District Council partners also benefit from savings. In addition, last year we gave the County Council a £333,000 discount for the volume of work that goes through our books - another saving."

"Our policies are firmly focused on Norfolk's well-being. We work with local suppliers and contractors to support the county's economy, encourage healthy eating through our catering contracts and concentrate on delivering environmentally sound initiatives."

Norfolk's schools are important NCS customers; each of the 480 establishments has an individual contract. Many Parish Councils are also signed up for grass cutting work. One of the toughest tasks is cleaning the cells at Bethel Street Police Station; staff get dressed up like spacemen to do the job. All the cleaning for Cambridge, Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies is carried out by NCS.

'In the current financial year we will save the County Council £2.02 million.'

In the late 1990s the County Council agreed to NCS establishing a school bus fleet. School bus costs were rising, with fewer coach operators driving up prices. NCS introduced 10 state of the art coaches in the Norwich area, high on comfort, security and safety. The vehicles successfully operate below the county average price per seat.

The yellow bus experiment encouraged NCS to tender for Sprowston Park and Ride, and this was followed by Harford Park and Ride, which opened in February. Peter Hawes added: "We are trying to making it more enjoyable to use the park and ride and are experimenting with piped classical music on the buses to help our customers arrive at work or their shopping expedition in a relaxed frame of mind" - more positive thinking from NCS.

Norfolk County Services Ltd.

T 01603 222596
F 01603 223106,
E info@norfolk-county-services.co.uk,
W www.norfolk-county-services.co.uk

Office hours 9am to 5.30pm.

Environment Awards

Notre Dame High School's commitment to the environment earned it the top prize in the County Council's bi-annual School Environment Awards.



The £500 award, sponsored by WREN - Waste Recycling Environmental, recognises the school's success in reducing waste and litter. Pupils at the school in Norwich have also set up a fairtrade tuck shop and developed biodiversity projects.

Other winning schools were:

Bignold Middle:

Best grounds project (middle schools), sponsored by Ben Burgess, EcoTech and Norfolk County Services

Colby Primary:

Best energy/buildings award, sponsored by Kier Eastern

Erpingham Primary:

Best grounds category (primary schools), sponsored by NPS Property Consultants Ltd

Reepham High:

Best transport category, sponsored by Bernard Matthews Ltd.

Sidestrand Hall:

Best community category, sponsored by ESPO

Snettisham First:

Waste reduction award, sponsored by the Anglian Water Group (AWG).

St Clement's High, Terrington St Clement

Best waste category (secondary schools), sponsored by Norfolk Environmental Waste Services (NEWS).

For more information on the winning projects visit www.norfolkesinet.org.uk/envedu.

The 2004/5 award programme will be launched in December.

New Director of Planning and Transportation

Sam Ralph, is the new Director of Planning and Transportation at Norfolk County Council.



Mr Ralph, who takes over from Tim Malynn, has been Deputy Director since 1993. He has extensive experience in all aspects of highways and waste

management, and in 1998, he promoted one of the country's first public private sector strategic partnerships for planning and transportation services. Mr Ralph joined Norfolk County Council's Highways Department in 1974. He held various posts, including Divisional Surveyor and Senior Assistant County Surveyor, before becoming Deputy Director of Planning and Transportation in 1993.

John Joyce has become acting Deputy Director of Planning and Transportation. He has spent much of his career working for Norfolk County Council since joining as a trainee from Thorpe Grammar School in 1971.

Visit Norfolk **Overhaul**

The county's main tourism website, www.visitnorfolk.co.uk has had a major overhaul thanks to a grant from the East of England Development Agency (EEDA).

New features on the site include a searchable accommodation database that gives details of nearby attractions; 'tips from a local' - how to make the most of your break; and special themes like birdwatching, golfing, historic house, arts and crafts, gardens, walking and cycling.

Coming soon –

Children special edition

Major changes in the way children's services are organised and delivered are being planned both nationally and here in Norfolk. In December 2003, the County Council's Cabinet agreed that the best way to ensure a brighter future for Norfolk's children and young people, was to develop an integrated service for them, led by a new Director of Children's Services.



This was in response to the Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters', which was followed on March 4th by the publication of the Children's Bill.

This is such an important issue locally and nationally that special editions of Norfolk Matters will be produced over the coming weeks to keep the county's stakeholders and decision-makers fully informed, and to provide opportunities to comment.

Portal opens window to services online...

A cutting-edge search engine that allows people to access a huge range of information online is now up and running on local council websites.

The Norfolk Connect Partnership, which is made up of Norfolk County Council and all district councils, developed the 'Norfolk Portal' using government funding. The Portal service is available on the county council's website (www.norfolk.gov.uk) and most district council websites.

People can access the Portal by using the normal search function from a council website to find information about a word or phrase, such as 'schools'. They will then have the opportunity to search across all local council websites, not just the site they begin from. This means that a vast range of services are available at the touch of a button, without people needing to know which council offers a particular service.

The Portal also presents people with recommended links to direct them to the most frequently asked questions on the same topic.

For more information, contact Teresa Coldicott, on (01603) 430637 Or e-mail teresa.coldicott@broadland.gov.uk



New information centres open in Norfolk

Two new council information centres have opened at Gorleston and Norwich, with friendly staff offering help and advice about a range of council services.

The centres give people the opportunity to find out about their council services face to face rather than having to use the phone or finding the information by another means.

Many people prefer to contact their council this way, and more established centres at Aylsham, Fakenham and Wroxham have already proved that this is an invaluable local service.

The new centres are now up and running at Gorleston Library and the Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library in the award winning Forum building.

People can visit any centre and get help with everything from filling in forms to finding out about their bin collection dates and bus timetables.

For more information about what the centres can offer, contact Caryl Wright on (01603) 224322 or e-mail caryl.wright@norfolk.gov.uk



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different language, please contact the Communications Unit on (01603) 222972 (minicom 223833)