

Norfolk Matters



The Newsletter of Norfolk County Council - www.norfolk.gov.uk



Bus Station Bid
Page 2

Grant Loss Threat
Page 3

Key Decisions Guide
Page 5

New Highways Office
- Back

Town and Parish Communication

There was an excellent response to our questionnaire on how to improve communications, with replies from 233 Town and Parish Clerks. The response backed-up findings from our meetings held with Clerks last year.

When it comes to the way we communicate with Town and Parish Councils, 68% of Clerks responding agreed that reports were too long, 66% felt that it wasn't clear what they had to do with the information and just over half (54%) thought that we send out too much information.

Clerks were well informed about the role of the County Council, with 75% stating that they know what services we provide. However, when it comes to knowing who to contact for help at information, only 57% of Clerks were confident that they knew the right person to call.

In the questionnaire we tested out some of the suggestions for improvement that clerks had given us. On the whole, these were spot on:

91% thought a summary sent with long documents would be useful

95% thought it would be useful for us to identify items that are for information only

99% said it would be useful if we stated the action required and deadline on a front sheet or slip.

A couple of areas of disagreement between Clerks were on quantities of information and on internet use. Clerks who used the internet wanted more information available in this format, whereas smaller parishes without access needed hard copies. Not surprisingly, larger councils wanted more copies of information, whereas small parish meetings wanted less.

Our leaflets were the most common source of information used by Clerks, cited by 88%, followed by Norfolk Matters (82%) and the Eastern Daily Press (71%). We are pleased that Norfolk Matters is being well used by Clerks, with 94% reading it and 73% keeping a copy.

Royal Message

to Norfolk Children



The Queen sends an e-mail message to school children during the official opening of the Millennium Library, Norwich, in July as part of Her Majesty's Jubilee Tour. She is watched by Jennifer Holland, Head of the Library Service, and Librarian Paul Drumm.

Norfolk's 114,000 school pupils in 454 schools have until the end of the year to reply to the message, which spoke of the benefits that new communications technology could bring, and ended:

"Much has changed over the 50 years since I became Queen. But the warmth of the welcome from the people of Norfolk has remained constant and is something that I cherish."

As a result of this consultation we are now placed in a good position to start work on improving our communications. We will be taking the findings to County Council members for discussion so that we can agree some actions that we can take to improve. We will then report back to Town and Parish Councils through Norfolk Matters.

Go to www.norfolk.gov.uk for previous editions of Norfolk Matters

Long Stratton

By-pass consultation

The Council will soon be starting a major consultation on possible routes for the A140 Long Stratton by-pass in South Norfolk. If the Council's Cabinet gives its approval on 16 September, the consultation will begin in the middle of October.

A detailed leaflet, including a colour map showing the route options, will be sent to key stakeholders - including district, town and parish councils. It will also go to local residents as well as being available on the internet, together with an electronic response form.

The Council is also planning an exhibition and a public meeting, to give people as much opportunity as possible to ask questions and consider how to respond.

The results of the consultation are expected to be considered by the Cabinet in January 2003.

Bus Strategy

deadline

September 30th is the deadline for comments on the County Council's draft Bus Strategy, which sets out to drive up the quality of passenger transport in ways that are realistic and achievable.

The strategy, which replaces the Passenger Transport Policy, is closely linked in the Council's Local Transport Plan (see page 4) and covers:

Targets for service levels in urban and rural areas;

Priorities for improvements;

Specific issues, such as access to the new Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital, the James Paget Hospital, Norwich Airport and the UEA;

Proposals for identifying the transport implications of major planning applications;

Park & Ride development policies;

Integration with other forms of transport.

To find out more contact Liz Joyce on 01603-224435, e-mail elizabeth.joyc.pt@norfolk.gov.uk

Facing The Future

Public consultation gets underway on two major planning documents this autumn

If you want to influence how Norfolk and the East of England region grows and changes over the next quarter of century, you will want to respond to consultations on two major documents, which get under way in September.

The Norfolk Structure Plan is now being reviewed to take it to 2025 and the County Council has produced an Issues Report to highlight the main driving forces which will affect planning decisions over the period. These include population growth, housing, economic development, climate change and traffic growth. We will soon be asking for your views about what you want for Norfolk.

Also from September, you will have the chance to think about these important issues at a regional level. New regional planning guidance (RPG14) will be published in 2004 and the long process of gathering public views starts soon, with widespread consultation on an options document.

Watch out for more information about how you can take part and help to shape our future.

Bus Station Bid

A bid for Government funding for a £9.2 million project to provide Norwich with a 21st century bus station and to modernise and strengthen bus links with the railway station has been submitted by the County Council.

The bid, prepared for the Council by consultant partners Mott MacDonald, has been submitted as a Public Transport Major Scheme phased over two years. It will be considered by the Department for Transport alongside other funding bids from around the country. A formal response is not expected until December.

The proposals include:

- A 12-bay Bus Station interchange;
- A 3-bay Railway Station interchange;
- Bus contraflows, priority measures and junction improvements between these two interchanges;
- Improvements of on-street stops in St Stephens and Castle Meadow.

The proposals have received broad support from Norwich City Council, bus and rail operators and other interested organisations.

The bid for funding was submitted after the County Council completed the purchase of the existing bus station and surrounds from Norwich Union. The Council is also planning to use part of the site for a new city centre fire station.

Putting Norfolk First

Fair Deal Campaign

Grant loss threat for County

Concern is growing that a national review of Government funding for local authorities could lead to Norfolk losing millions in Government grant - money that is vital to keep essential services running and avoid further big Council Tax rises.

This year (2002/03), two-thirds of the County Council's budget of £609.7 million comes from Revenue Support Grant (31%) and the National Business Rate (35%). Council Tax provides the remainder (34%).

The Government is consulting on proposed changes in the way grant is distributed, and if all the worst options arise, Norfolk County Council could lose £25 million in Government grant. Although a 'safety net' would provide some protection, we have, as yet, no indication of what level of protection Norfolk would be given. Norfolk Police could also suffer significant losses.

Any loss of grant to the Council would come at a time when there are already severe pressures on the budget, including many which are beyond the Council's control.

A joint campaign is being considered, and it is likely that the County Council and the Police will be enlisting the support of all other authorities, agencies and individuals in Norfolk to strengthen the representations being made to Government Ministers.

Please watch for further information on this campaign. Norfolk Matters will carry an update in its next edition.

Norwich hospital access - later consultation deadline

People interested in the future of road access to the new Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and nearby research park still have time to make their views known.

Norfolk County Council, which is consulting widely on a range of road options for this growth area to the south west of Norwich, says it wants everyone to have the chance to make their views known.

The deadline for responses has been extended to 7 October.

You can still get a leaflet by calling the Council's leaflet request hotline number is 01603 222143.

The results of the consultation will be reported on 25 October to the special Hospital Access Task Group of local councils and MPs which was set up by the County Council. On 18 November, a report setting out a proposed strategy for meeting future road access needs will go to the County Council's Cabinet.

Housing Survey

People living on recently built housing estates in Norfolk have been taking part in a County Council survey which will help when housing developments and community facilities are planned in the future.

A sample of residents on estates in Caister-on-Sea, Cromer, Dereham, Diss, Downham Market, King's Lynn, Long Stratton, North Walsham, Norwich, Thetford and Wymondham have been asked to fill in a questionnaire on topics such as where they came from, how they are employed, how many children they have and the number of cars they use.

The results of the survey, which will not identify any individual household, will be useful in planning for housing, schools and employment.

One practical outcome will be a review of the guidelines on the amount of car parking which should be provided in future housing developments.

This will be important when the Council is considering government guidance which aims to reduce parking provision in some developments.

Are you connected to UKVillages.co.uk?

UKVillages.co.uk is an innovative project to provide free, quality web site facilities for all villages and communities in the UK.

There is a page set up for every village or community in Norfolk where you can post village notices, advertise events and promote local businesses.

This excellent site is free to use, so log into UKVillages.co.uk, see what information is held about your village already and then why not add your own?

County Council Website:
www.norfolk.gov.uk

County Strategic Partnership meets

The first meeting of Norfolk's County Strategic Partnership was held at the Abbey Conference Centre in Norwich on July 19th.

The Chairman of the partnership board is Mr John Alston, who said the County Strategic Partnership would have a critical role in working with others to develop and implement a strategic plan for the future of Norfolk as a whole.

He said that such a plan must address a whole range of issues and services critical to the success of the county in the future.

It would also need to make connections with and between existing and emerging strategies, across partnerships and organisational boundaries, and with Norfolk communities and residents.

The meeting, attended by representatives from district councils and other organisations from all parts of the county, received briefings on a number of these topics. It broke up into groups to consider the issues likely to face Norfolk over the next five to ten years, and the role of the County Strategic Partnership in addressing them.

Key issues identified in small group discussions included:

Infrastructure - roads, public transport and information technology.

Aspirations and perceptions - the need to raise personal and educational expectations and to improve external perceptions of the county.

The rural economy - the changes within the agriculture sector, the role of small businesses and the low wage issue.

The ageing population - including the positive aspects of this.

Membership of the County Strategic Partnership was also discussed, and while there were suggestions that representatives could be invited from the business community, Rural Community Council and young persons, the Chairman also expressed concerns about the membership becoming too large.

The next meeting of the partnership is in October and further meetings are planned for November, January and March.

Transport blueprint **On Line**

Norfolk's Local Transport Plan (LTP) - a blueprint for the county's transport infrastructure and future needs - has been put on the internet by Norfolk County Council.

The LTP was published in July 2000 and covers a five year transport investment programme, with details of the County Council's priorities and how it hopes to achieve them. Each year, the Council receives an allocation of funding for transport investment from the government and has to decide what it can do with the resources available - using the LTP as a guide.

There are area plans covering rural areas, the Norfolk Coast and the urban areas of Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn.

The LTP also includes information about some of the major schemes which the County Council wants to implement over the next few years if funding is made available:

- Spowston Park and Ride scheme
- development of the bus station site in Norwich and improved public transport facilities in the city centre
- Construction of the Nar Ouse Regeneration Route in King's Lynn
- Pedestrian improvements - new footways and pedestrian crossings

The LTP also contains performance targets such as:

- Within five years no more than 20% of the Principal (A) Road network to be below a set standard
- Bridge strengthening to be complete by April 2006
- By 2010 to have cut The number of road users killed or seriously injured in road accidents to be cut by 40% by 2010.

To access the LTP web pages, log on to the County Council web site at www.norfolk.gov.uk, click on Travelling and then use the drop down menu to select Local Transport Plan.

Roads get recycled too

Recycling isn't just something we do with household waste - roads can be recycled too. It's a way of re-using materials which might otherwise have to be disposed of - at a financial and environmental cost.

Worn out road surfaces and edges are repaired using materials recovered at the site, which can be mixed with new binders and re-laid.

The County Council has recently signed a £1.8m contract with Lafarge Contracting to do recycling work on another 30 of the county's roads.

Your Guide to Key Decisions - September to November

On the first day of every month, Norfolk County Council publishes a Forward Plan of Key Decisions, showing the principal decisions to be taken in the next twelve months. The plan sheds light on who is making the decision and when, who will be consulted and how the public can make their views known in time.

A key decision is one which is either financially significant, or will have a considerable impact on the local community living or working in the area. Our guide to key decisions from September to November gives the decision to be made and a contact for further information and for making representations.

Copies of the full Forward Plan are on our web site www.norfolk.gov.uk (Go to 'Your County Council'). It can also be viewed at County Hall during office hours.

The current plan shows

Cabinet will rule on the council's new **Community Safety Strategy** on 14 October. Contact Peter Burnham on 01603 224490 or email peter.burnham.cex@norfolk.gov.uk.

A decision on the Social Services policy '**Supporting People**' is due to be made by Cabinet on the 14 October. Contact Chris Greenhill on 01603 223079 or email Chris.greenhill.socs@norfolk.gov.uk by 30 September.

The County Council's **Arts Policy** will be set by Cabinet on 14 October. Contact Mari Martin on 01603 222269 or email mari.martin.art@norfolk.gov.uk by 30 September.

Between October and December, Cabinet will decide on the council's **Supplementary Planning Guidance** (the strategy on the phasing of new housing in the Norwich area) and what the **Parking Standards** for new developments in Norfolk should contain. Contact Mike Moore on 01603 222728 or email mike.moore.pt@norfolk.gov.uk.

On the 18 November, Cabinet will decide upon the **access to UEA/Research park/Hospital cluster** in Colney, Norwich. Contact Tim Malynn on 01603 222500 or email tim.malynn.pt@norfolk.gov.uk by 7 October.

Cabinet will consider **Health Care Criteria** on 18 November, after taking in the views of the Social Services and Health Review Panel of 13 September. Contact Graham Robinson on 01603 223435 or email graham.robinson.socs@norfolk.gov.uk.

Cabinet will select options for a **Northern Bypass for Norwich** on 16 December. Contact David Pearson on 01603 223233 or email david.pearson.pt@norfolk.gov.uk by 29 November.

The **Minerals Plan Review** will be looked at by Cabinet on 16 December. Contact Mike Halls on 01603 222754 or email mike.halls.pt@norfolk.gov.uk.

Citizens Advice Bureaux funding comes under the spotlight at Cabinet on 16 December. Contact Stephen Holland on 01603 223429 or email stephen.holland.trad@norfolk.gov.uk by 31 October.

Grants for Childrens Groups

Cash is available to small voluntary groups in Norfolk who work with children and young people who are disadvantaged in some way.

Help from the Local Network Fund for Children and Young People may be given to groups working with youngsters who face a range of issues. They may suffer from poverty, disability or, for example, suffer isolation and lack amenities in rural areas.

The Norfolk Rural Community Council administers the grants which are funded by the Government and which range from £250 to £7,000. Since March 31 groups have received grants for rural and urban projects.

There is still money available - and the NRCC want to hear from groups who support children or young people. But who may be inexperienced in funding applications.

For further information or to discuss a project idea contact Jo Maddocks at the NRCC on 01953 851408.

Library facelift

Wells Library has re-opened after a three-week facelift.

The library has been granted New Opportunities Funding for the development of a £200,000 learning centre, with improved computer access.

Access to the building has been improved, automatic doors installed at the entrance and the library has been fully refurbished.

A voice for older people

The Norfolk Older Peoples' Forum is an independent body which has the backing of local government, health and other public services across the County. Its development coincided with the Better Government for Older People (BGOP) initiative sponsored by the Cabinet Office.

The main purpose is to ensure public service providers can hear older peoples' views and can feedback their responses.

The first working meeting of the Forum took place in October 2001 and it has already been successful in influencing decisions made by the County Council.

The Forum is actively working towards improving services for older people within the County and it has become a familiar route for the Social Services Department to undertake consultation on service issues.

How to **contribute**

If you are an older person and you are aware of a burning issue in your area please contact the Forum's Secretary.

The Forum executive will aim to take up the issue on your behalf and provide you with feedback on the progress made.

The criteria for membership of the Forum is that you must be aged 50 years or over and reside in Norfolk.

If you would like to be included on the Forum's mailing list please contact the Secretary, Brian Darton on 01263 824730 or send your details by post to: Mary Roche, Norfolk County Council, Room 506, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DH, telephone 01603 223047.

Never too Old for I.T.

Older people in Norfolk are being encouraged to get the most out of computers with a new project, which includes training especially designed for them.

Pilot projects in Thetford have proved so popular that courses are now being rolled out across the county. Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Learning Partnership, Norfolk Training Providers and Age Concern Norfolk are among the partners backing the scheme, which is funded by Norfolk's Promoting Independence Grant.

Sarah Day, Health & Social Care Planning Officer, said: "This training is targeted at older people who couldn't normally access courses. By holding them in day centres, sheltered housing schemes or at residential homes we're bringing the technology to them."

Age Concern Norfolk is helping to establish the courses across Norfolk, and Chief Executive Rex Humphrey said: "Email and the internet have become part and parcel of everyday life and older people can't afford to miss out on that. For an older person who isn't that mobile, having skills to do something like access their online bank account or find out about holiday opportunities would be invaluable."

- Guidance on computer and internet training for older people
- Useful weblinks for older people
- Advice on choosing a suitable venue
- Advice on the best computers to use
- How staff, volunteers and carers can help reinforce the learning

New courses are now being set up across Norfolk including Shipdham/Hingham Day Centre, North Walsham, Ethel Tipple Court residential home in Hellesdon and Saxon House in Loddon.

For more information about the courses contact Sarah Day on 01842 760719 or sarah.day.socs@norfolk.gov.uk

New @ **Your Library**

A donation of £19,000 from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has allowed the Council to buy 13 new computers for libraries in Watton, Swaffham, Gaywood, Downham Market and Mile Cross. This will allow more people to access the free internet and e-mail services Norfolk Libraries Service provides.

Installation of the terminals marks the start of a project to equip Norfolk libraries with some 120 new PCs, offering users better access to full word processing and more on-line resources, along with high speed broadband internet access. This should be complete in the autumn.

Across Norfolk some £1.3m is being spent as part of the Government's 'people's network' plan to give everyone in the UK access to computers and the internet. Their availability in libraries is bringing in a new generation of library users

"They come in to use the computers and are amazed at what else we have to offer," said Jennifer Holland, Head of Libraries. "We are working hard to make sure that libraries keep up with the times and offer communities all the resources that they need."

County Council Website: www.norfolk.gov.uk

SUPER service for business

A revolutionary internet-based service which helps new and existing businesses cut through regulatory red tape is now available in Norfolk.

There is already national interest in the way Norfolk County Council's Trading Standards Department has got together with the county's seven district councils to provide a 24-hour electronic one-stop shop for regulatory information on:

- Trading Standards
- Environmental Health
- Building Control
- Planning

The £600,000 SUPER Project, which is partly European Union funded, sets out to answer the basic but critical question: 'What are the main regulations that will affect my business?'

In answering, SUPER does not bombard the inquirer with an overwhelming mass of data, nor is it merely a collection of links to the partner organisations'

own websites. It is a truly integrated service which allows the inquirer to home in on the relevant information,

presented in jargon-free language, with the minimum of fuss. For anyone requiring more detailed information, SUPER also provides a direct means of contacting the right department in the right council.

On entering the site, SUPER asks for the business postcode, and then drop-down menus help the user to the information they need. A second route to the information is through a keyword search option.

The website also includes a 'latest news' window, where changes to regulations are highlighted, and allows local business events and seminars to be publicised.

To ensure that SUPER best meets the needs of users, it will be regularly updated to take account of users' inquiries. It also offers the opportunity for other regulators to be added - discussions with the Fire Service are already underway.

The site address is: www.superuk.com

National awards success

Two pioneering schemes backed by the County Council's Social Services Department have won national Health & Social Care awards - a unique double matched by no other authority in the country.

Norfolk Social Services' Family Support Teams, which provide a mental health service for children who have difficulties with their behaviour or emotions, won the Primary Care (Access) category. Work for the teams continues to grow with more than 2500 referrals in the last two and a half years

And a charity scheme based in Downham Market - Community Service Volunteers - won the Promoting Independence award for its VOCAL scheme, which is funded by

Norfolk Social Services and allows people with learning difficulties to become volunteers in their own community. Some 36 people with learning difficulties are involved with the CSV VOCAL scheme, helping older people with shopping, gardening, helping in residential homes, schools, shops and conservation

projects.

They received their awards from Alan Milburn, Secretary of State for Health.

The picture shows Michele Summers, Sara Clark, Lynne Woodall, Dawn Gregory, Alan Milburn, Charles Hare-Winton.

Team Manager Ian Griffiths was unable to attend the ceremony.



New Director of Social Services

Norfolk's new Director of Social Services is Lisa Christensen, who joins the County Council in the autumn to take over from David Wright, who is retiring on October 31 after 17 years of service with the authority.



She will take over a department that will this year spend £243 million on providing services to many of the county's most vulnerable people.

Ms Christensen, currently Executive Director, Social Services and Health Improvement, with the

London Borough of Lambeth, has held a number of senior managerial appointments within the social services and health sectors.

Ms Christensen is 45, married with two daughters and is now looking forward to moving to Norfolk with her family.

Car Costs calculator

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

01603 223132

alison.sayer.pt@norfolk.gov.uk

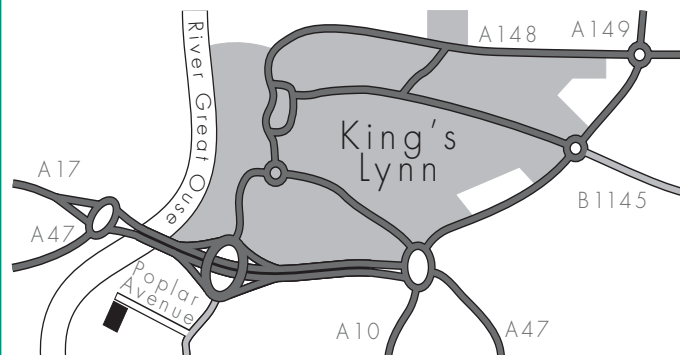
Highways - a new office for the West of Norfolk

Norfolk County Council has opened a new highways area office at King's Lynn to cover the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council area.

You can contact the new office to report any highway matters, such as potholes and damaged pavements, fallen trees, blocked road drains, and road safety issues.

Streetlight faults can also be reported - just leave a message on the special answerphone 01553 778037. Please give the location and the streetlight number (on the lighting column) if you can.

The offices include a road maintenance depot, where a new local team is based, as well as a depot at Sculthorpe.



How to contact the West Area Highways Office:

Write or call in:
Norfolk County Council
Highway Services
West Area Office
Poplar Avenue,
Saddlebow,
King's Lynn PE34 3AQ

The office is accessible to wheelchair users.

Telephone:

0845 602 1930 (calls charged at the local rate). This is a 24 hour number - outside office hours there is an answerphone and a message giving the number for emergencies.

Fax: 01553 692129

E-mail: west.area.pt@norfolk.gov.uk