

Changes at the top

Management changes mean several teams at Norfolk County Council are reporting to new chief officers.

Until now, Alan Tidmarsh has been leading the areas of service that are affected. Alan heads the efficiency programme and is retiring at the end of December.

This means that e government services, including Charles House

Services and ICT, are now included in the remit of Paul Adams, Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services.

The Customer Service Centre and Council Information Centres are now part of a more integrated communications service led by Joanna Hannam, Head of Communications - although the Council

Information Centres will still co-operate closely with the library service.

In addition, responsibility for Emergency Planning and Trading Standards has been transferred from Paul Adams to Richard Elliott, Chief Fire Officer, to reflect the broader Cabinet responsibility for Fire and Community Protection.

Celebrating Success

- Thirty-two million pounds is heading for schools in Norfolk after bids to the Department for Education and Skills.
- The Norfolk Record Office's collections have been given Designation Status by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).
- The Learning Difficulties service and Road Safety have been shortlisted for Beacon status.
- NCC and South Norfolk Council have been shortlisted for Beacon status for Positive Youth Engagement.

Earthquake Rescue

After the huge earthquake hit Pakistan last month, staff from the county's Fire Service flew out to join teams of experts searching through the rubble for trapped survivors.

Helen Lambard, a Control Room systems support officer working in Hethersett, and her husband **David**, a Fire Officer currently in Gt Yarmouth, were part of the international rescue effort and went out on a Government-chartered plane with members of the International Rescue Corp arriving the day after the disaster.

"There was total devastation," said Helen, 40. "It was certainly the worst earthquake any of our

members had ever seen.

"People had no warning – we had reports of 600 school children who had been sat at their desks, 400 in one building and 300 in another, with no survivors."

Helen and her team headed for the epicentre in the remote Muzaffarabad, their work hindered by dangerous aftershocks.

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15% discount day
for all staff & £50
in vouchers to
be won
see page 8

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Helen and husband David in Pakistan



In early December the Government will tell us our likely level of government grant – not just for the coming financial year of 2006/7, but also for the following year.

Tim's Talkback



Indications are that this will be an extremely tight settlement and because it is a two-year announcement, if it is bad news, it will not improve in the following year. This will mean that tough times lie ahead, because more than one third of our total budget comes from the Government, with council tax, business rates and income making up the rest.

As Alison King, leader

of Norfolk County Council, said at a lunch for Norfolk media editors earlier this month: "We are likely to face a funding gap of something like just over £20 million in the year ahead. Bridging it will not be easy – and, I say this to you openly and honestly, is not likely to be without some pain."

We understand that the vast majority of any additional money coming to local

authorities will be focussed on education and targeted directly to schools, leaving little to meet huge extra costs from inflation and pressures on key services.

We are planning hard to meet next year's costs, and through our efficiencies programme are looking more long term at how we can become more streamlined and deliver over £30 million of

efficiency savings over the next three years. We expect savings from the efficiency programme to start making a real impact from 2007 onwards so we really need to work hard now to find savings that will enable us to balance our books next year and continue to provide essential services to people in Norfolk.

Life Swap

Glimpses into the lives of young people and county councillors have come together in a revealing website, set up as part of Local Democracy Week.

Five young people and their five respective County Councillors captured a day in their lives, using camera-phones supplied by O2. It was one of many events organised by local councils and schools for Local Democracy Week from October 17 to 21.

Pictures include Cllr Shelagh Gurney on the school run, Cllr James Joyce grabbing a few extra minutes in bed before 'starting the day', and Cllr Daniel Cox 'getting steamy in the bathroom'.

The young people who took part included two supported by Norfolk County Council's Leaving Care teams and two currently not in education, training or employment. Jonathan Icton, who is severely physically disabled and uses a wheelchair, also took part.



Jonathan, 23 and from Wymondham, said: "It's about showing that all young people are different. Some people might be out and about all day but for me, being in a wheelchair, it's different because access to places is so difficult which is really frustrating."

Now anyone can see the results at www.norfolklifewap.org.uk

Want to improve your Maths skills?

Find out how you could benefit from FREE nationally-recognised maths qualifications. Level 1 is the same level as GCSE grades D to G, while Level 2 is the same level as GCSE grades A to C.

Contact Helen Millward, Adult Education Skills for Life by email helen.millward@norfolk.gov.uk or ring (01553) 669240.

Tight two-year settlement approaches

Between now and February 22 we have to plan our budget for the next two years – we expect Central Government to announce our funding settlement in early December.

First suggestions from chief officers about how we could work within a below inflation increase of 2.2%, to help manage the likely budget shortfall, will go to Cabinet on December 12. When the report is ready, we will send information to all staff, so you can read it before it goes into the press.

Cabinet will then consider these suggestions and agree which options they want to put out to consultation with staff, customers, partners and members of the public generally. They will then consider matters again at their meeting at the end of January and agree what recommendations to put to full council for decision on February 22.

Efficient, modern and streamlined.

Running alongside our work on budget issues, our general efficiency programme is designed to make us more efficient in delivering improved frontline services that local people want and driving out savings.

It is identifying where we can deliver the same quality and quantity of service for less, deliver more for the same cost and where we can free up money to be reinvested in other areas.

Consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers recently completed a health check on us as an organisation suggesting that we could achieve sizeable efficiencies delivered by some 55 projects spread across the whole County Council. We have reviewed what they suggested and have identified 10 programme areas on which to focus our efforts.

These programme areas cover the following:

- Children's Services
- Finance functions
- Support Services including both professional areas (e.g. Finance, ICT, HR) and general administrative support
- Adult Social Care
- Customer Service Centre
- Procurement
- Passenger transport functions
- Libraries operations
- Strategic Planning & Transportation
- Adult Education

So far each project's sponsor and project lead have been developing business cases to describe each project and what and when it will deliver. An overall Efficiency Programme will be presented to Cabinet for decision on December 12, along with our Medium Term Plan and budget suggestions.

Find out more

If you have any questions or concerns about the efficiency programme – or better still, have good ideas for us to work on, email the team

efficiency@norfolk.gov.uk

You can also log on to the intranet site at

<http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/eServices/Content/default.asp>

Timeline for staff

End November/early December

The Government announces our funding settlement or RSG (Rate Support Grant).

December 12

Cabinet debates chief officers suggestions for how any shortfall in funding for both 2006/7 and 2007/8 can be met.

The efficiencies programme of projects will be agreed.

December 13 – January 23

Consultation on the budget with staff, stakeholders, service users and members of the public.

Online consultation will be posted on

www.norfolk.gov.uk

and on our corporate intranet. Paper copies will be available at Libraries and offices from early January.

January 30

Cabinet will take consultation into consideration and make a final recommendations for all County Councillors to consider.

February 22

Full Council decides on budget proposals and sets the council tax figure for 2006/7.

Web chat

October saw the second in our online Talk Back sessions with people involved in key projects or developments in the council.

This time **Alan Tidmarsh**, E-services and Efficiency Director, and **Paul Adams**, Director of Corporate Resources and Cultural Services, answered questions connected to the efficiencies programme, which ranged from fashion dilemmas to staff retention:

Virginia Wakely (Remodelling Project Support Officer):

'Most organisations, according to Investors in People, have difficulty in recruiting the right person to give quality and quantity to a job and this can lead to inefficiencies in service, with new staff taking an average of six months to "come up to speed".

'What is NCC as an organisation doing not only to recruit quality staff but also to retain the experienced and highly effective workforce it has now?'

Paul: 'Thanks Virginia. This is a big issue, with no easy answers. There is a lot going on at the moment, particularly around the modern reward strategy project, which is looking at how we reward our staff over the coming years. We are also introducing more flexible working practices, which should make it easier to retain staff.'

Karen Witham (Business Support Manager):

'Given the level of experience and expertise currently within this organisation, would you

The next Talk Back session will feature **Roy Elflett**, County Emergency Planning Officer, and **Diane Mortimer**, Business Continuity Officer, talking about Emergency Planning, in the light of the bird flu scare, so log on to **intranet.norfolk.gov.uk** at 12.30pm, **Tuesday December 6**. Send your question in advance to **christine.birchall@norfolk.gov.uk** or telephone 01603 222843.

say that employing external consultants is necessarily the most efficient use of resources?'

Alan: 'This is an issue that has been well aired by elected members and I know people have different views on it. Personally I feel that we need both challenge and support to help us overcome some of the natural barriers in our thinking and behaviour which are necessary.

'Bearing in mind the level of savings we are looking to achieve I believe that this investment will prove good value for money.'

To see the full transcript go to the corporate intranet at intranet.norfolk.gov.uk.

Emergency planning in the spotlight

The media frenzy over avian flu has put the world of emergency planning in the spotlight.

The aim of Norfolk's Emergency Planning Team is to assess any threats and risks to the county and plan for the response and recovery should an incident happen – whatever it may be.



Diane Mortimer, pictured left, is our Business Continuity Manager, tasked with ensuring the County Council can continue to operate at all times.

"We have put a report to the Chief Officers Group about the implications of an influenza pandemic," she explained. "We have

looked at staffing levels, what the minimum level is teams need to deliver a service and how long for. There's no way of knowing how many people it might affect – the quoted figure is 40 per cent but this really is a worst case scenario. The fact is the risk to humans is very low. Loss of staff can occur for many reasons – 'ordinary' flu can also reduce staffing levels, as can severe weather or a fuel crisis.

"We don't have a

specific plan for every situation – they are more generic, such as loss of the building or power, communications or staff.

"For all those teams that haven't already got a plan, we will be sending out templates they can fill in and send back. Business continuity is every manager's responsibility and we will help them to achieve that."

For more information call **Diane Mortimer** on 01603 224404, or her assistant **Jenny Key** on 01603 223376.

Chief Fire Officer



Q
&
A

Richard Elliott joined Norfolk Fire Service as Chief Fire Officer in September 2000. He started in the fire service back in 1975 in Hampshire and has served with various other fire brigades, including West Midlands, London, Warwickshire and Shropshire. He lives near Wymondham and is married with two children, aged 23 and 20.

Name and position:
Richard Elliott, Chief Fire Officer

How long have you worked for Norfolk County Council?
Just over five years

What have been your proudest achievements working for the authority?
It's difficult to say how much of what Norfolk Fire Service has achieved is down to any one individual - I have a great team and we have new ambition. We have consistently improved operational BVPI results over the last five years while also staying within budget. Perhaps one of my more rewarding achievements has been maintaining good staff relations and public confidence locally throughout the national fire strikes.

What inspired you to follow your career path?
My father, the best firefighter I have known.

What do you consider to be the best/ worst thing about Norfolk?
As a person who likes to walk and occasionally to paint, Norfolk provides a rich variety of landscapes, spectacular coastline, big skies and wonderful sunsets. As a sporting fanatic it's a shame Norfolk no longer has a premier league football team.

Which person in public life do you most admire?
Bishop Graham – he has the wonderful gift of providing a fascinating insight on just about any topic.

What really makes your blood boil?
Fly tipping

What is your idea of happiness?
Growing then eating my own vegetables

What do you never leave home without?
My mobile phone.



Launch of the Norwich Orbital
A bus service linking residential areas and key sites in Norwich is to be launched on November 28. The Norwich Orbital's route will include County Hall, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, the University of East Anglia and

Broadland Business Park. The service will run every 30 minutes in each direction between 6am and 7pm, Monday to Saturday, with an evening service to be introduced at a later date. For more information about fares, timetables and the route go to www.passengertransport.norfolk.gov.uk.

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"We were the first rescue people they had seen in Muzaffarabad since the earthquake," she explained.

"We got three boys out – one had been trapped for 48 hours, two had been in there for four days.

"The locals had tried to get them out, but had failed."

Members also advised about setting up field hospitals and assessed humanitarian needs before returning to Britain a week later, so that the helicopters could then be used to ferry aid to affected areas.

New faces

Three new senior appointments have helped to complete the line-up for the management team of Adult Social Care.

The directorate was set up in March following a restructure which saw children's social services joining up with education to form Children's Services.

Lorna Payne has been appointed the new Assistant Director of Community Care.

Kathy Bonney has been appointed Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager.

Graham Robinson has been appointed Head of Strategic Commissioning.

Norfolk County Council's

Investors in People Manager of the Year 2005

It's not easy being a manager, just ask anyone who is! Managing your time to ensure you do all of the things a good manager should do takes energy, commitment and a wealth of skills. When the people who work for you nominate you for Manager of the Year it gives you a real buzz and sense of achievement. We had a great response to last year's event, and we are looking forward to receiving an even greater number of nominations this year.

So, how do you go about nominating your manager? Simply do the following:

1. Write a short paragraph starting with the words set out in the form.
2. Circle up to five of the words or statements listed, which you feel add to the paragraph you have written about your manager, and submit them as part of your nomination.

*I/we think our manager
should be considered for Manager of the Year because.....*

Circle up to five of the words or statements listed below:

Communicates clearly	Customer focused	Makes time for people
Involves people	Thanks and praises people	Professional
Motivates people	Involves people in the business	Helpful
Gives constructive feedback	Develops people	Has a positive attitude
Builds effective relationships	Empowers people	Listens to others

Nominations must be in by December 31 2005, and should be sent to:
Chris Cleary, Corporate Organisational Development Manager
The Annex, County Hall, Norwich, or emailed to chris.cleary@norfolk.gov.uk

Mystery shopping update

The independent “mystery shopping” exercise carried out this summer has proved we have made great strides in our standards of customer care, but of course there is still more we can do.

OPERA Community Research tested responses across services, using five different communication channels – face to face, telephone, letter, e-mail and internet.

They were compared to results undertaken in the previous survey in 2003, before we opened the Customer Service Centre, introduced new customer care standards and improved our website.

We’ve compiled examples to show how things have changed.

Face to face

Mystery shoppers visited County Hall reception and the Customer Information Centres. In 2003

there were just two visits where the shoppers agreed strongly or slightly that staff went “beyond the basics”, compared to 22 in 2005.

Telephone

In terms of staff knowledge of an issue, in 2003, 44% of calls were rated excellent or good, rising significantly to 68% per cent in 2005. And in 2003 61% of staff sounded friendly and helpful, compared to an excellent 81% in 2005.

Letter

There were found to be significant improvements in the proportion of letters rated professional and knowledgeable, well-organised and using plain language.

But meeting the target of five days to respond to a letter, has proved to be quite a challenge.

Email

We are generally well within

the customer care standard of responding to e-mails within three working days, in fact some are responded to in minutes. However, the quality of response has slipped.

Internet

There were improvements in page load time, clarity of language and ease of use on our website, according to the mystery shoppers.

All the issues will be looked at over the next few months. On the whole it shows we are making good steady progress and staff should be proud of what they have achieved.

For more information, contact Corporate Communications and Marketing Manager **Christine Birchall** on 01603 222843 or Policy Performance and Research Officer **Alison Smith** on 01603 223047.

Christmas Quiz

How well do you know your Chief Officers? Try this quiz to find out . . .

- 1** Which three Chief Officers keep chickens?
- 2** Which Chief Officer had an apprenticeship in the shoe industry?
- 3** Which Chief Officer was a junior county fencing champion?
- 4** Which Chief Officer’s dad worked for toy company Lego?
- 5** Which Chief Officer played guitar in a rock band?

Answers on back page

It’s under way...our modern reward strategy

By now, everyone who is part of the Modern Reward Strategy project should have had a copy of the launch booklet.

The project will review pay arrangements and conditions of employment and if you haven’t had your booklet yet, you can get one by calling 01603 222172.

The analysis began in August with the identification of around 200

“benchmark” posts representing all the main occupations and levels up to SO3.

Job analysts were recruited to interview around 320 benchmark postholders, a process we hope will be completed this month.

The jobs will then be evaluated by a panel of managers and union representatives. Contact your relevant HR department about grading

arrangements in the meantime.

At the beginning of 2006, all other jobs will be matched against the benchmark structure and similar jobs will be grouped together using a job family approach. This will also make it easier for employees to see career paths.

We will be keeping you up to date via the intranet at HR@norfolk and issuing regular newsletters.

Read All About It

Ottakar's Bookstores in Norwich and King's Lynn are offering staff the opportunity to win £50 of Ottakar's vouchers that can be spent at either store.

Ottakar's is one of Britain's leading book chains with a reputation for strongly individual high street shops staffed by book enthusiasts able to offer superlative levels of customer service.

Norwich has one of the largest Ottakar's stores in the country and carries over 50,000 different titles on two floors, including a constantly expanding range of general titles. It is also home to a Costa coffee store, located on the first floor.

Q: How many Ottakar's stores are there in Norfolk?

And as an added Christmas bonus, Ottakar's have kindly offered a special Norfolk County Council day in both Ottakar's stores on **Thursday December 8**, when a 15% discount will be available to all employees on production of your NCC identification*. Both stores will be open from 9am until 8pm on the day, so why not visit www.ottakars.co.uk and see what you fancy?

**Please note that this offer excludes books already subject to a promotional discount ie those clearly marked at £'s off or on the 3 for 2 promotion and the sale of book tokens and Ottakar's vouchers.*

Nelson mania

As part of its contributions to the Nelson celebrations, Norfolk County Council has reproduced a book first published on the centenary of Nelson's death in 1905. The 2005 version includes an introduction by County Council Chairman John Baskerville, and a foreword



by Frank Meeres of the Norfolk Record Office, updating information in the original document considered too risky to use in 1905. On sale, priced £3.50, from all offices of the Eastern Daily Press, our libraries, at County Hall, the Archive Centre or by calling the Customer Service Centre on 0844 800 8020.

OTTAKAR'S
**15% discount day
for all staff & £50
in vouchers to
be won**

The King's Lynn branch is a friendly and lively store that has been in the pretty bustling market town for eight years.

Just answer the question below and send it, along with your name, address and work phone number, to Frances Evans, by email at

frances.evans@norfolk.gov.uk or via the Communications team in Rm 520 at County Hall, by December 2.

Norfolk County Council Sports and Social Club

Saturday

November 26 @ 8.30pm
Robbie, fantastic male vocalist, back by popular demand

Saturday

December 10
Christmas Extravaganza
Three course meal £12.50 with cabaret

Friday

December 23
Last Working Day
Music by
Freddies Disco

Saturday

December 24 @ 7.30pm
Children's Christmas Party
With Rogues Gallery Quiz
And games and music
With Freddies Disco

Saturday

December 31
New Year's Eve Party
Admission by ticket only
(available from bar staff)

Saturday

January 28
Motown and Soul
With Janie K



If you need this leaflet in large print, or in an alternative version, please contact Norfolk County Council Communications Unit on (01603) 224471