

**NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**Councillor Stephen Askew – Annual Report 2016**

Fire stations and recycling centres were saved from closure in February as the county council agreed its budget for 2016/17. After all-party negotiations, proposals that went into the final budget were as follows:

- Reverse the closure of fire stations
- Restore Norfolk Arts Service grants
- Reverse Norfolk Museums Service lone-working proposal
- Reverse Museums Service redesign
- Reverse saving on Norfolk Record Office - search room, new archives and conservation work
- Restore Norfolk Record Office - opening hours and specialist archive work
- Restore Libraries materials spend and associated staff
- Historic Environment service
- Highways maintenance standards
- Re-open Docking recycling centre
- Restore bank-holiday opening at recycling centres
- Restore full-time opening at Ashill, Heacham and Morningthorpe recycling centres
- Create a new pot-hole and small projects fund £1.5million – this is to ensure not only good quality roads, but, crucially, a good standard of road safety – cyclists and motorcyclists are especially vulnerable to pot holes.

**Devolution Update (March 2016)**

As you'll have read in the press, there is much talk about a deal between the government and the three East Anglia counties – Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire – to devolve significant powers to local level. The details of any deal have yet to be confirmed. There is much talk of an elected Mayor for the three counties. So far in my visits to PC meetings and talking to the general public I have yet to find anyone who thinks this is a good move. At this present moment I too can't see any merit in that proposal. The final details are not yet known, but clearly, it could mean significant powers, potentially around economic development, job creation and the development of roads and other transport infrastructure being under local control. The possibility exists that this could also come with additional funding for the three counties, and the ability to retain more tax revenue locally. In all, the three counties includes 23 local council leaders together with two Local Enterprise Partnerships. Getting agreement from all of these will no doubt be no easy task. However, the potential prize could be well worth having, and the government has made devolution a flagship policy of its second term. We'll wait and see!

**Parish Partnership Scheme (March 2016)**

Funding of £380,000 for 122 small scale highway projects across Norfolk was approved by councillors last month. (March) The money from the county council's Parish Partnership scheme, will be matched by Parish and town councils who were invited in June 2015 to put in bids for funding for schemes important to their local area. This comes on top of the £1.5million pot-hole and small-projects fund. The most popular bids have been for vehicle activated signs, which has seen 44 applications for signs which in most cases are to remind drivers of their speed. This year the Norfolk Safety Camera Partnership contributed £80,000 towards these bids, boosting the total available Parish Partnership funding to £380,000. Other popular schemes are Trods with 24 bids put in for this simplified, lower-cost alternative to footways. And helping to promote safety at schools will be part-time advisory 20mph speed limit signs with flashing warning lights installed outside 12 schools.

**Norfolk Youth Parliament elections**

A record number of Norfolk's young people have voted to elect nine new Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) representing each of the county's political constituencies. A total of 39,938 of Norfolk's 11-18 year-olds cast their vote for free on their mobile phones for their preferred candidate. The figure represents 51% of the county's 11-18 year-olds, the last election in 2014 saw a turnout of 48%. Wendy Thomson, Managing Director of Norfolk County Council, announced the results at County Hall on March 22nd. Working collaboratively with officers, members and partners, they will

develop the issues highlighted in the Make Your Mark ballot. Almost 17,000 young people took part in the Make Your Mark ballot in October last year which aimed to prioritise the biggest issues facing young people. Further details of the candidates and winners are available at: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/youthparliament](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/youthparliament)

### **NDR work progress (March 2016)**

Work is now underway on this important scheme which will help deliver 10,000 new homes and 12,000 jobs. The road, when it opens, will be a 20km dual carriageway running from the A47 at Postwick, south-east of Norwich, to the A1067 north-west of the city, and is currently the country's biggest local authority-promoted road building project. Steel reinforcement used on Norwich Northern Distributor Road will be 100% British, main contractor Balfour Beatty confirmed on Friday 15 April 2016. The main construction contract, which started on 4 January, includes nine main structures – six bridges over the new road, and three under (an underpass and two bridges to cross the Norwich to Sheringham railway and Plumstead Road). Work is now moving from site preparation to the main construction. The road is expected to be open to traffic by early 2018.

### **Rise in number of Norfolk's young people in education or training (February 2016)**

Norfolk has seen a big rise in the number of 16-18 year olds now in education, employment or training. There are 1,128 more young people in the county participating in further education and training compared to May last year. Since that time, there has been a significant increase in the two areas of greatest challenge: increasing participation at 17 and reducing the number of unknowns. The pace of improvement for participation at 17 has increased at such a rate that it is now in line with the national average. In addition, the participation of 16 year olds is now well above the national average. The number of unknowns has also reduced from 16.1% in May 2015 to 6.8% in December 2015 (national average is 10.6%). The average percentage of 16-18 year olds classed as NEET (not in education, employment or training) for November 2015-January 2016 was 4.2%, which is now in line with the national figure. Advice for young people on education and training options in Norfolk is available at [www.helpyouchoose.org](http://www.helpyouchoose.org) or through the helpline on 0344 800 8022.

### **First Better Broadband contract completes ahead of schedule and under budget (Oct 2015)**

185,885 mainly rural homes and businesses have been given access to fibre-enabled broadband, thanks to the first Better Broadband contract. Originally due to finish this December, it was announced at the end of October that the first Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) programme contract completed three months early and reached more properties than anticipated and made significant savings. More than 80% of households and businesses in the county can now buy a superfast broadband service (24 Megabits per second and above), nearly double the number who could receive these speeds three years ago before the BBfN programme got underway. The money saved as part of the first contract will now be reinvested in the next phase of the BBfN programme, which is due to bring faster broadband speeds to even more remote parts of the county. Planning work is already underway and the first services are due to be available from December 2015. People can check whether their home or business can receive superfast broadband by visiting the Better Broadband for Norfolk website which is updated as new broadband services become available.

### **Joint venture helps vulnerable families stay together (Sep 15)**

A project which aims to help Norfolk families stay together by providing vulnerable parents with targeted mental health support has had a successful first six months, with no babies on the scheme coming into care. The Norfolk Parent Infant Mental Health Attachment Project (NPIMHAP) has seen a team of therapists, psychiatrists, social workers, health professionals and family support workers liaise to provide parents with a specially tailored package of support designed to improve their relationship with their baby. A joint initiative between Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) and Norfolk County Council, it works specifically with mums at risk of post-natal depression and psychosis, as well as those who have difficulty forming attachments with their children. It was launched in response to the high numbers of children aged under two who are in care in Norfolk, and has been made possible by a £625,000 grant from the government.

### **Lowest ever number of people killed on Norfolk's roads, but no room for complacency (Jan 16)**

The road casualties figures for 2015, released by the Norfolk Road Casualty Reduction Partnership, show that fewer people have died on Norfolk's roads over the last year than ever before. The statistics show that the numbers of road users suffering fatal or slight injuries reduced compared with the previous year, although serious injuries increased.

#### Norfolk road casualty statistics - 2011-2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Fatal	43	39	40	39	33	
Serious		312	314	352	340	352
Slight	2,136	2,011	1,999	2,199	1,990	
Total	2,491	2,364	2,391	2,578	2,375	

### **Short-breaks service launched to help reduce numbers in care (Mar 15)**

This was launched early last year in Norfolk to help reduce the number of children in care and support families to stay together. Norfolk County Council's new 'short-breaks service' provides access to leisure and educational activities and time away from home for those at risk of coming into care. Building on the short-breaks services already provided for children with disabilities, it gives young people an opportunity to have much needed breaks in a specially designed home in Norwich. The service means children aged from 6 to 17 get to spend time away from home, with access to a range of support. The service was inspired by a successful scheme in Blackburn, which has helped to reduce the number of children coming into care by giving families respite, particularly when their children have challenging behaviour.

### **Norfolk County Council and Barnardo's join forces to support children at risk of sexual exploitation (Jun 15)**

A service to protect and support victims and those at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) was launched in Norfolk last June. Norfolk County Council joined forces with national children's charity Barnardo's to create the initiative, which provides help and advice to 'at risk' vulnerable children and young people. Barnardo's is the leading agency in the UK providing specialist support to sexually exploited children and young people. For more than 20 years the charity has been protecting those at risk but it is the first time that the charity has worked directly with young people in Norfolk at risk of CSE. The main aim is to identify, help and protect victims and children deemed at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Young people using the service will have keyworkers who can help them to understand risks and keep themselves safe. They will be referred to the service either via the county's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub or via early help services in the county.

### **Norfolk/Suffolk waste deal extended (May 15)**

The inter-county deal, which sees some of Norfolk's waste dealt with at Suffolk County Council's new energy-from-waste (EFW) plant was extended for a further four years, in May last year, to last until 2020. The extension was agreed as part of Norfolk County Council's work to secure four years' worth of waste services, using facilities that are already up and running inside or outside Norfolk, to replace its current arrangements which end this year that deal with the 210,000 tonnes of rubbish left after recycling (residual waste) that Norfolk generates each year.

**Council's children's services under the spotlight after new 'inadequate' rating from Ofsted (Dec 15).** In December the government announced that a special commissioner would be coming in to help improve children's services in Norfolk. This comes after the county council was given another 'inadequate' rating by Ofsted. Dave Hill is the director of children's services at Essex County Council, and has been working with Norfolk's staff for the last few months now with the aim of helping the council develop better ways of working and, most importantly, better outcomes. In their report, Ofsted highlights under-developed services for children in, and leaving, the council's care. It is to be hoped that the commissioner will be able to help bring about the much-needed improvements.

Ultimately, he can place the children's services in a self-governing trust, if he feels leadership is inadequate. There will be more updates on this in the coming months.

### **Improved GCSE results for Norfolk's pupils (Oct 16)**

Norfolk's schools have narrowed the gap on the national average at GCSE for the second successive year, according to provisional results published last autumn. Early results suggest that Norfolk has climbed 35 places up the national league tables over the last two years, with a 16 place jump since 2014. Statistics show that 53.8% of students achieved five A\* to C grades, including English and maths - compared with 52% on the same day last year\* (an improvement of 1.8 percentage points). Progress in maths in Norfolk is particularly strong – 67.3% of students made expected progress in the county, putting Norfolk above the national average of 66.6%. The news follows rapid improvements in both assessment results for five-year-olds and phonics results for six-year-olds this year. Reading performance for seven-year-olds has also gone above the national average for the first time.