

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO WATTON ANNUAL MEETING 2023

£133m for highways and transport in Norfolk over the next year

Carbon-cutting transport schemes are set for a £29 million boost in Norfolk, despite the tough financial climate. Norfolk County Council's Cabinet approved a forward looking and carbon-cutting transport budget for the new financial year at its meeting in March. At £133m the 2023/24 highways and transport budget represents a £29m increase on the previous year's budget. Despite inflation being expected to dent the authority's spending power the highway and transport team have been focusing on maintaining and improving the network and continuing strong investment in carbon cutting transport strategies.

£50m Bus Service Improvement Plan Funding for Norfolk

Norfolk County Council was only one of around 30 authorities who successfully received an allocation from the Bus Service Improvement Plan from government, receiving one of the largest allocations at £50m. The Council is now working closely with the Bus operators to implement enhanced routes and services as well as reviewing infrastructure and fares to encourage passenger growth and improved bus journey reliability. This should enable bus routes to be more sustainable in the long term. Following the receipt of the first payment, measures have already been implemented. which includes new late night bus services serving Thorpe St Andrew, Thorpe End, Rackheath, Salhouse, Wroxham and **Watton**.

As part of its Bus Service Improvement Plan, the County Council has identified Watton as one of 20 Towns in Norfolk which qualifies for a Gold Standard Bus Stop. A Gold Standard stop will provide upgrades including a covered waiting area, lighting, real-time passenger information, additional seating, cycle parking, printed timetable information etc

Thousands more trees and hedgerows to be planted in Norfolk this winter

As part of the [1 Million Trees for Norfolk project](#) Norfolk County Council is preparing to plant more than 75,000 young trees and hedges across the county in the months ahead. In 2019, the Council agreed an ambitious scheme to plant a million trees over five-years. The pandemic brought many challenges and caused delays which meant at the end of last year the total planted trees stood at just over 68,000. Now the project is picking up pace rapidly, and early in 2023 the Council's Hedge

Restoration Fund will have planted 55,000 hedge and tree plants on six County Farms owned by Norfolk County Council. The hedges will see improvements in nature connectivity across the farms by filling in gaps in hedgerows. This is particularly good for our wildlife as it helps join up habitats and provides corridors for wildlife to safely travel along. The project is funded by a grant from The Tree Council.

£1.5m boost for 12 pioneering jobs and skills projects

12 projects to boost Norfolk's economy received £1.5 million from the County Council's business rates fund.

I'm pleased to say that one of the successful projects was the Wayland Digital and creative Media Centre in Watton which secured 125k in funding from the County Council. I have been very pleased to support this initiative and the funding will help facilitate the first stage of the project.

Norfolk's Social Infrastructure Fund gives 10 organisations money to improve community impact

Norfolk County Council has awarded £770,000 to organisations who will be able to make a large positive impact in the communities in which they operate. This is the third round of Social Infrastructure Funding, which has provided capital grants to organisations who can use the money to improve facilities for communities and boost the level of local community services. This year's funding pot totalled £1 million, with £225,000 to continue the successful partnership with Norfolk Community Foundation in expanding their Nourishing Norfolk food hubs across the county, and £775,000 available for individual projects to improve communities across Norfolk.

Again I was very pleased to see the successful bid for funding made by the Charlotte Harvey Trust, who were awarded £38,000 for refurbishments at the Youth and Community Centre in Watton.

Norfolk Museum Service secures further funding

In November 2022, Norfolk Museums Service secured £4.126 million of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation funding for the period 2023-2026. The funding will enable Norfolk Museums Service to deliver new Early Years' programmes across the County, expand its formal learning offer, deliver new targeted

programmes to young people 11-25, along with a range of new health & wellbeing activities for residents of all ages. The funding will also support the delivery of new community learning programmes through the NCC Environment Hub at Gressenhall.

No Cold Calling Zones introduced

308 individual No-Cold-Calling Zones (NCCZ) have been set up in the County with 11 new zones being launched in 2022. The 308 NCCZs protect 14,474 individual households across the county.

£1m funding for out of school activity facilities

Active Norfolk, who are hosted and supported by Norfolk County Council, have secured £1m to support schools to open their facilities outside of school hours to enable local communities to be more active. The Council will be launching an ongoing programme to enable people to access physical activity opportunities as part of the treatment pathway for long-term conditions such as diabetes, stroke, and cancer. The programme will also build community capacity to support greater equity of access to opportunities for people all across the county. Working closely with Children's Services, the Council provided holiday activities and food at Easter, during the summer holidays and over Christmas, for around 10,000 children in 2022. Around 1 in 5 of those children were those with a disability or SEN. This was delivered by c.100 local community providers and invested c.£2m into local organisations.

Adult Learning leads the delivery of numeracy skills of adult residents in Norfolk

Norfolk has received £4.7 million to improve the numeracy skills of adult residents through a government initiative called Multiply. This funding will last until the end of March 2025, and by then the target is to secure 11,000 adult registrations onto Multiply programmes in Norfolk. Adult Learning is leading the delivery of this major new programme, delivering both in-house and through grant funding arrangements with the colleges and other, smaller organisations and grassroots providers. The funding targets adults who need support with and lack confidence in their numeracy skills and a wide range of interventions are taking place across the county.

Norfolk to benefit from new Family Hubs and Start for Life funding

Children and parents in Norfolk are to benefit from a new cradle to career approach to family support. The government announced that Norfolk County Council will be one of 75 local authorities receiving some of the £302m new Family Hubs and Start for Life funding. It means the county will receive approximately £6m to further develop its prevention and early help services for families with children and young people up to the age of 19 (25 if they have special educational needs and disabilities). The Family Hub approach will bring together a wide range of services so that families can access support in the spaces and places that they live and visit, such as libraries and community buildings. The Family Hubs network will provide simple access to 'Start for Life' services, providing the best support for babies in the first 1,001 critical days from conception to the age of two, setting them up to maximise their potential for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing.

Locally I have been pleased to support, through my Member's Highway's budget:

- 1. The scheme to deliver a 20mph speed limit through the High Street to the Brandon Rd roundabout. The project is currently going through the legal consultation part of the process.**
- 2. Flashing signage, proposed on the Brandon Rd at Cranswick to raise driver awareness of pedestrians crossing at change of shift times.**

I was also pleased to support:

- 1. the Town Council's successful bid, through the County Council Parish Partnership Scheme, for the trod (recently completed) on Thetford Rd. This will enable residents safe walking access to the bridlepath leading from the Thetford Rd roundabout through to Merton Rd, also enabling access to Peddars Way.**
- 2. The allocation of £125k funding through the Business Rates fund towards the Digital and Media Hub project in Watton.**
- 3. The proposal for a Gold Standard Bus Stop in Watton**
- 4. The successful bid by the Charlotte Harvey Trust, through the Norfolk Social Infrastructure scheme, for funding for refurbishments at the Youth and Community Centre.**

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