

Norfolk County Council Report for March

Fire recruits

As the first week of March is On Call Awareness Week the Fire Service is using this to attract more recruits. Information is always available if anyone would like to know more about becoming an On Call Fire fighter.

Broadband

The Better Broadband for Norfolk which has been improving the countywide network over the last few years has been very effective in supporting people working from home and children doing their schoolwork as well as providing a lifeline for people who are self isolating.

Work is also being carried out with the mobile network operators to improve 4G coverage across the county.

COVID 19

Staff are looking forward to the end of lockdown and getting back to their normal jobs, reopening museums, libraries etc and welcoming people back.

In the meantime many staff are still working for or with the NHS to provide assistance where they most need it including vaccinations and tests.

Grants

This year the Parish Partnership Scheme will have been running for a decade. The match funding it provides for Parish Council projects exceeded £715,000 for 113 projects agreed in December for completion this year. Projects included trods, village pathways, bus shelters and vehicle activated signs. The scheme will be available again the next financial year.

The £6,000 Members Highways Grants will be extended this year to £10,000 per Division and can now include environmental projects.

Flooding

Norfolk County Council is still dealing with the results of some of the flooding and discussions have begun re preventative work. The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance has been set up, chaired by Sir Richard Dannatt, and bringing together over 30 different agencies that are involved with water.

Budget

The budget was agreed at the Council Meeting on 22nd February with an increase of 3.99%. This includes the extra 2% allowed by Government to support Adult Social Care.

Libraries

Following the campaign to acquire IT devices for children, so that they can attend virtual classes and do homework, the Library Service is going to work with schools and offer all children aged 16 and under membership of the e – library. This will enable them to access e-books, magazines and comics from home to help with homework and widen their range of reading. It is said that children's reading skills have diminished nationally as a result of the pandemic so this should help to improve their reading abilities and enjoyment of books.

Libraries will also stop charging children aged 16 and under for the late return of books so that they are not put off coming to the library by fear of owing money if they cannot get to the library in the allotted timescale. The overdue charges were halted for everyone during the lockdowns.