

County Councillor Report to Caston Parish Council Nov 2024

Proposals to support some of Norfolk's most vulnerable people this winter have been set out today.

The County Council is looking to use £1.15m of the £6.7m allocated to the county through the Household Support Fund to keep people warm and help them make ends meet. This follows the government's decision to make the winter fuel payment means tested from this winter.

Councillor Andrew Jamieson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance at Norfolk County Council has said:

"We are extremely concerned about the impact that the government's decision will have on our communities. Winter can be an extremely challenging time for our older residents and the cost of heating your home can make it difficult to pay for other necessities. There will be thousands of people who will miss the new cut-off by a small margin, leaving them without the means to pay for the cost of fuel. The county council will make sure payments make their way quickly to those who most need them, working closely with Age UK, Citizen Advice Bureau and other local partners. However, the funding only lasts until March. I will continue to urge the government to find a solution that isn't to the detriment of our older residents."

The county council will use £0.75m to partner with local organisations, including Age UK and Citizens Advice Bureau, to reach some of those most affected by the changes to the Winter Fuel Payments. They will also put £400k into the 'warm spaces' scheme which provides vital respite in community spaces across the county. The proposals also include £3.6m to continue providing cost-of-living vouchers for families eligible for means tested free school meals. This is in addition to:

- £1.00m to Norfolk Assistance Scheme. Delivered by the Norfolk County Council, the scheme includes direct award of assistance, the provision of household items and emergency help, alongside a range of support and guidance
- £0.70m to local councils across Norfolk to provide proactive and crisis support
- £0.25m to Adult Learning to continue free access to a range of courses to help with cooking at home, budgeting, and digital skills.

The Household Support Fund has been extended to the end of March 2025.

Winter gritting programme

As we head towards November and the colder days draw near, County Council's highways maintenance teams are getting ready to help keep Norfolk residents moving safely around the county. 2024 will witness the most technologically advanced gritting operation Norfolk has ever seen. With 45 brand new gritting vehicles joining the fleet over the last 2 years and all 58 vehicles now operating at the highest specifications available.

Each vehicle will run with brand new auto-salting technology. Aided by satellite navigation, it will allow teams to salt the road with limited manual intervention, making the operation more accurate, saving time and reducing waste. On average, the technology reduces the amount of salt used by between 10% and 15% and saves salt being distributed onto grass verges and other areas that do not require gritting. The technology was trialled in some vehicles last year ahead of full implementation across all depots.

Using mapping data and information from the Norfolk network, vehicles can track pre-programmed routes making treating Norfolk roads easier and more precise. Because route data is uploaded into the vehicles, any driver can select any route, set the required spread rate and drive - improving safety and ensuring more effective use of resources and drivers. This means that the network will be treated appropriately and consistently throughout this winter helping to keep Norfolk's roads moving.

Norfolk Economic Strategy

Ambitious plans for Norfolk's economy have been unveiled in a new strategy presented to the county council's cabinet.

Norfolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, sets out an overview of the local economy and key priority areas for economic growth.

The strategy seeks to build on Norfolk's influence in key sectors, including clean energy, agri-tech and cutting-edge research.

Have your say on Norfolk County Council's saving proposals

As it seeks to agree a balanced budget for 2025/26, Norfolk County Council is asking for resident's views on a number of proposals to save money or raise revenue in the next financial year. As part of the council's work to find £44.722m of savings, public consultations are now open on three of the proposals under consideration:

- Raising Council Tax
- Reducing Street Light usage
- Review of our Housing Related Support Services

Full detail of these proposals, as well as information on how residents can have their say, can be [found online](#).

To receive a hard copy of the consultation document, residents can call 0344 800 8020 or email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk.

The consultation is now open and will close on Monday 16 December 2024.

New Roads Programme - Support for Children and Young People

More young people in Norfolk are being supported to stay at home with their families or return home, thanks to the specialist support being provided by Norfolk County Council.

The [council's New Roads programme](#), which provides wrap around support for children at risk of coming into care, or those already in care, has prevented 395 children coming into long-term care since it was launched four years ago. This has avoided costs of £35m and substantially improved outcomes for young people who have often faced significant challenges. The council is now extending the approach to work with children with disabilities and their families. The success is one of several outlined in the annual review of children's residential care, which was discussed by the council's Cabinet this morning.

Stop at 14: Campaign to encourage people to think about their drinking habits

The second phase of the Stop at 14 campaign, originally launched in February 2024, will take place from 1-30 November, ahead of the festive season. The campaign encourages people to reflect on their drinking habits and to understand what a unit of alcohol looks like, so that they can make healthier and safer choices.

Seasonal Vaccines

The Norfolk and Waveney Integrated System have reported that NHS staff in the East of England have already delivered more than 2 million seasonal vaccinations as the NHS ramps up its efforts to avoid a ‘triple-demic’ of flu, COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) this winter.

Anyone eligible can book a COVID-19 or flu vaccine appointment via the [NHS website](#), NHS App, or by calling 119 for free. The flu vaccine can also be booked by searching online for a local pharmacy and there are [walk in sites available](#) to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

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