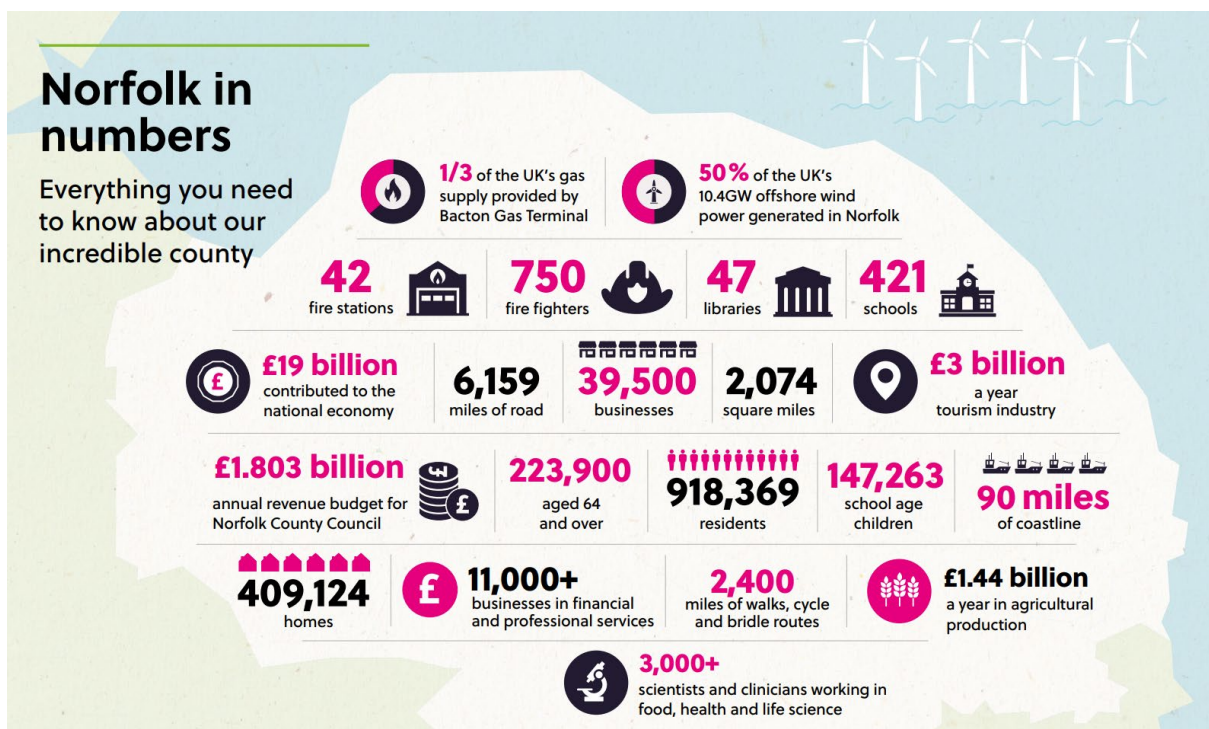


**Andrew Jamieson, County Councillor, North Coast.**

**Deputy Leader and Member for Finance, Norfolk County Council.**

**Please find my Report for March 2024.**

## 1. Council agrees £528m net budget



As Member for Finance, I am extremely pleased that Councillors have backed a budget that "delivers for Norfolk", in the face of major challenges facing local government. This is despite major cost and demand pressures facing all councils.

I was quoted as saying: "Our priorities are stable and sustainable finances, well delivered public services, economic growth and protecting and enhancing Norfolk's heritage and environment."

I commented that it was **a budget for the future**, with an additional £60m for adult social services and £35m extra for children's services, and savings from transforming how the council operates.

Key issues, for which I will continue to lobby the next Government include: multi-year settlements, fair funding so that rural tax payers do not continue to pay more, while receiving fewer services than their metropolitan counterparts, and reform of adult social care funding.

County Council leader, Councillor Kay Mason Billig, said the council would continue to be ambitious for Norfolk and had achieved many successes - against a tough economic backdrop.

She said: "We know that our residents will be concerned about the decisions we make and how that may affect them. This year's budget has been one of the toughest to determine but we have a statutory duty to provide a balanced position, and that is what we are presenting to you."

The key headlines from the budget agreed today are:

- £122m of increased cost pressure to meet demand and rising costs next year - including £34.6m for inflation, £38m for legislative requirements (mainly the effect of an increased National Living Wage), £39.7m for demand and demographic issues and £9.6m for policy decisions.
- £41.5m of new savings, including £9.6m from transforming how the council operates.
- A proposed 4.99% increase in the County Council's share of Council Tax, in line with the Government's capping level (2.99% for general Council Tax and 2% for adult social care). This would increase the Council's share of band D bills to £1,672.11. A 4.99% rise would generate £24.9m.
- A small number of the budget proposals have been identified as requiring consultation, as they may relate to a policy or service change. Cabinet will take decisions on these proposals in the summer, after considering the consultation results.

Background:

Norfolk County Council's share of Council Tax bands, 2024-2025:

- A £1,114.74
- B £1,300.53
- C £1,486.32
- D £1,672.11
- E £2,043.69
- F £2,415.27
- G £2,786.85
- H £3,344.22

Proposals that will be consulted on:

- Charging an admin fee for brokering on behalf of people who self-fund their adult social care
- Review of the adult social care non-residential charging policy - including the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG)
- Recommissioning of social isolation and loneliness contracts
- Norfolk Record Office - pre-booking of visits and new paid services to increase income generation
- Switching off 2% of streetlights
- Recycling centres: Reduction of opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities

## **Have your say on Norfolk savings proposals**

Norfolk County Council is seeking views on a number of savings proposals within the council's Community and Environmental Services department.

These proposals are part of £41.5m of savings that Norfolk County Council needs to make to balance its budget for 2024/25. The Council faces difficult decisions to deliver on its ambitions for the people of Norfolk against a difficult economic climate and more than a decade of reduced funding.

It goes without saying that no one would wish to make savings that reduces services to residents. However, over the past three years, I have shifted the bulk of our savings from small cuts felt by everyone to delivering better, value for money services through a series of transformation programmes. This is why we need multi-year settlements: as Member for Finance I am relying on multi-year service reorganisations that continue to deliver front line services while also delivering value for money. Annual funding from Westminster makes this task unnecessarily complex.

The following proposals fall within the councils' **Community and Environmental Services** department, which includes **Norfolk Highways, Libraries, Museums, Waste Management** and the Norfolk Record Office:

- **Street lighting:** To switch off some streetlights across Norfolk in areas where it is considered safe and appropriate to do so.
- **Norfolk Record Office (NRO):** To introduce pre-booking of visits and change opening hours.
- **Recycling centres:** To reduce opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities.

Between them these proposals could save around £457,000 a year.

The council is consulting the public on these proposals until midnight on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024. The consultation survey is available on the council's Citizen Space platform at: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/savingsproposals](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/savingsproposals)

Proposals on streetlighting involve switching off 2% of streetlights across the county to save money and reduce carbon emissions. Norfolk County Council has identified 34 locations where the council plans to switch off some street lights. This represents 1.35% of the Council's target of 2%. Further locations will be identified at a later date.

Approximately 1,000 of the 54,000 street lights that the county council manages across the county would be switched off under these plans. It is expected that this could save up to £200,000 per year and cut carbon

emissions annually by 76 tonnes, providing an environmental benefit and significantly contributing towards the council's Climate Strategy.

The proposal for introducing pre-booking and changing the opening hours of the Norfolk Record Office would extend the current limited Friday service to a Thursday with the same 10am to 4pm opening hours and maintains a full service on Tuesday and Wednesday from 9.30am until 5pm.

However, compressing the NRO's full searchroom service to two days runs the risk of excessive levels of demand in the searchroom. Therefore, the NRO is proposing to introduce a booking system on those days. People who turn up without booking will still be admitted, providing there is sufficient capacity, but cannot be guaranteed a place. People will be able to book an appointment via email, over the phone or in person at the NRO. These changes could save a total of £57,000 in 2024/25.

Finally, proposals to reduce the opening hours at some recycling centres in Norfolk would see 13 recycling centres close on a Wednesday, in line with the centres in neighbouring Suffolk. The additional six recycling centres in Norfolk operate part time and are already closed on Wednesdays. This proposal could save around £200,000 a year.

The results of the consultation will be reported to Cabinet in June 2024.

People can share their views in a number of ways:

- Online at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/savingsproposals](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/savingsproposals)
- By email at [haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk)
- By post, writing to:  
SAVING PROPOSALS CONSULTATION 2024/25  
Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK  
Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing  
County Hall  
Martineau Lane  
Norwich NR1 2DH

The consultations close at midnight on 22 March 2024.

## **2. Norfolk flood protection takes centre stage in Westminster**

- We have all been made aware of the threat posed by inland flooding and coastal erosion in Norfolk. East Anglia had its warmest and wettest February on record last month with an average of 106.4mm of rainfall across the month, beating the previous record of 95.2mm set in 1916, and a mean temperature of 8.2C, surpassing the previous record of 7.6C set in 1990.

To address flooding from and around the Burn, on 7th February I brought together representatives from some of the 36 different entities responsible for flooding (as good an example of how the salami-slicing of local government has got in the way of strategic decision-making). A series of actions were taken away: operational coordination has improved since: however, much needs to be done:

### **Simplification and streamlining of how we operate;**

**Support legislative change. Abstraction licence and planning support to encourage landowners to build reservoirs designed for climate adaptation. Capture excess water in times of flood, for use to support agriculture and environment in times of drought. Have streamlined requirements and proportionate red tape - currently makes building new reservoirs very difficult;**

### **Dredging and maintenance;**

**Work with the NSFA partners to find a common-sense approach to licensing and permit regulations in times of excessively high ground water - a 'COBRA-esque type meeting at which predefined trigger points allow for temporary relaxing of rules;**

**Greater EA involvement with the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance. Take the lead on some projects.**

Issues been laid out starkly for MPs as Norfolk County Council took their case for change to Westminster.

The delegation from Norfolk, led by Norfolk County Council Leader Cllr Kay Mason Billig and the Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance (NSFA), Henry Cator, met with MPs, on the 71st anniversary of the 1953 North Sea Flood, to explain the risks Norfolk faces and how those risks could be addressed.

These risks threaten both Norfolk residents and the contribution Norfolk makes to the wider country, as home to 54% of the offshore wind generation capacity in the UK and a major producer of food.

### **Challenges of coastal erosion and flooding discussed by councillors**

At the same time, we are calling for a dedicated Minister for the Coast, as well as funding from central government for flood defences for Norfolk.

Securing a commitment to such an appointment would give confidence that coastal issues are recognised at the heart of government and that solutions to the threats these communities face will be addressed.

The report spells out the challenge posted by coastal erosion along Norfolk's 90 miles of coastline, including the predictions of possible sea level rises of up to 1.15m by the end of the century. To compound the challenge, Norfolk has part of the fastest eroding coastline in North-West Europe.

Without action, it's estimated that in North Norfolk alone approximately 1,030 residential and commercial properties could be lost to erosion by 2105.

### **3. 24/7 free travel to all disabled bus pass holders in Norfolk**

From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 all Norfolk residents who hold a disabled concessionary travel pass will be eligible for free bus travel 24 hours a day, seven days a week when travelling within the county.

The decision, which was published today by Norfolk County Council, means that more than 14,500 people across the county who hold a concessionary bus pass due to disability, and their eligible companions, will now be able to travel on any bus at any time free of charge across Norfolk.

Previously concessionary pass holders with a disability were only able to travel for free on buses off-peak (all day on Saturdays and Sundays but only from 09:30 Monday to Friday) except for those registered blind or visually impaired.

Offering free travel at all times is over and above the minimum requirement set by government, and is something that a local authority can choose to do but doesn't have to do. The change was recommended following an updated equality impact assessment of the scheme which concluded that it is now unfair to offer a discretionary enhancement to just one group of disabled people (i.e. those who are blind or visually impaired).

The recommendation agreed by the individual cabinet member was to 'extend the concessionary travel discretion of free travel at all times to all eligible disabled passholders and eligible companions, from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024.'

The cost of providing this enhancement is estimated at £50,000 which will be funded by the Council's ring-fenced public transport budget provided by the Department for Transport.



#### **4. New Rural Business Awards: put your local businesses forward:**

Norfolk County Council and the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association have joined forces to launch the new Norfolk Rural Business Awards. The awards were launched on 6<sup>th</sup> February at the annual Norfolk Farming Conference and are designed to recognise the essential nature and huge importance of Norfolk's rural communities and businesses to the region.

Farmers, young farmers, winemakers, brewers, food producers, agri-tech companies, businesses with close rural connections, and rural community groups are all part of the rural community. With more than 9 different categories from best emerging talent to best farming innovation adopter, it is anticipated these new awards will celebrate exceptional talent and businesses.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing is the fourth largest sector in Norfolk, accounting of 8% of all businesses. And many other businesses across the county are closely linked to the sector including businesses in the accommodation, food, retail, and food science sectors as well as technology and engineering businesses.

The entry form for nominations to each category can be found online at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/norfolkrruralbusinessawards](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/norfolkrruralbusinessawards). The entry deadline is 19 April 2024. Judging will include a visit to all shortlisted businesses, and each finalist will be asked to participate in a short film. Award categories include:

- Best Rural Community Initiative - sponsored by Aviva
- Best Farming Innovation Adopter - sponsored by Lovewell Blake
- Best Food Producer - sponsored by Fountain Fresh Imports
- Norfolk's Unsung Hero - sponsored by Breckland District Council
- Best Drink Maker - sponsored by Woodforde's Brewery
- Best Farming Champion - sponsored by CLG Norfolk Ltd
- Best Emerging Talent - sponsored by Plant Grow
- Best High Growth Business - sponsored by Growth Hub
- Best Sustainable Land Use / Farming Exemplar - sponsored by Birketts LLP

## **5. New film office opens Norfolk up to filming possibilities**

Norfolk County Council has awarded Norfolk Screen a 2-year contract to represent the county as its official Film Office. The combined spend by film and high-end television production (HETV) in the UK reached £6.27 billion in 2022, the highest ever reported.

The two-year Norfolk Film Office pilot programme will proactively promote Norfolk and its assets as a location for TV and film productions, as well as act as the front door for any location enquiries to ensure Norfolk capitalises on the growth of the sector. Any increase in economic activity for the county via additional filming activity will confirm the viability of a stand-alone Film Office.

Large-scale TV or film productions generate an increase in business for a wide range of companies surrounding a filming location, from cafés to taxi companies, accommodation businesses and retail. They also provide opportunities for local film companies to loan equipment or hire out studio space, and for local freelance film professionals from make-up artists to camera and sound technicians to have the opportunity to work closer to home. The new film office will support a dynamic and growing screen sector cluster within Norfolk.

## **6. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service forms partnership to help people involved in serious road traffic collisions**

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is the first fire service to partner with a charity to help those affected by serious road traffic collisions.

Chief Fire Officer, Ceri Sumner, has signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Road Victims Trust, so fire fighters at the scene of an accident can signpost people to get ongoing help from the charity.

The Road Victims Trust (RVT) works to help people impacted by grief or trauma following a road death, serious injury or life-changing collision. It

offers emotional and practical help, as well as a specialist counselling service to people across the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

The charity, which started offering its support services in this county last summer after receiving funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, provides free and confidential support for as long as it is needed to those affected by serious collisions - including witnesses.

This partnership builds on Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service's continued work with other key agencies to help reduce the number and impact of serious and fatal collisions in the county.

### **Free electrical fire safety events being held by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service**

Three electrical fire safety events will be held at different locations in the county in early March, delivered by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.

Members of the public are invited to bring along their electric blankets and portable heaters to be tested and will also be able to speak to the fire service about fire safety in the home.

The events will also be attended by Trading Standards and Healthwatch Norfolk. This will give people the chance to find out about product safety and advice, and accessing help with health and social care.

The electrical safety days will take place from 10.30am to 4pm each day at:

- North Earlham Fire Station on Tuesday 5 March
- Great Yarmouth Fire Station on Wednesday 6 March
- King's Lynn North Fire Station on Thursday 7 March

There is no need to book - just turn up with your electrical items.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service was successful in bidding for funding from national campaigning charity Electrical Safety First to hold these events, which aim to help people stay safe in their homes.

There are things everyone can be doing in their home to reduce the risk of fire. Some of these are:

- Testing your smoke alarm regularly
- Staying at least one metre from any portable heaters
- Charging devices when you are awake, alert and around
- Keeping tea towels and oven gloves away from gas hobs

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service offer free Home Fire Safety visits for people over 65 or anyone who has a disability which could make it more difficult to react to a fire.

To book a visit for yourself, a friend or family member or to refer someone as part of your work or volunteering role, [visit the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service web pages](#).

## **7. £1 million boost for Highway Parish Partnership Schemes**

Schemes totalling over £1m will be distributed across Norfolk to deliver the wants and needs of local parishes and residents as part of the Highway Parish Partnership.

The Parish Partnership scheme began in September 2011, when Parish and Town Councils were invited to submit bids for local highway improvements, with the County Council funding up to 50% of bid costs. The key benefits of the scheme are that it:

- Delivers local priorities identified by local people.
- Draws in additional funding for small scale highway improvements, enabling us to collectively deliver more schemes.
- Gives local communities an opportunity to directly influence the improvements in their local area. The programme continues to be well received by Parish/Town Councils, Local Members, and communities. Information about the number of bids received through the scheme over

the past twelve years demonstrates there is a good spread across Norfolk.

A County Council contribution £467,884 and a Safety Camera Partnership contribution of £43,760 along with funding from Town and Parish Councils, will enable a programme of local works totalling £1,040,586 to be delivered.

**I will be only too pleased to help you put together a bid for PPS funding, but you should start the process as early as possible for maximum chance of success.**

**I would also remind you that last year I increased individual Local Members Funds to £11,000, to be used for small highways, footpaths or environmental projects. Please come forward with local schemes.**

For information on current schemes and if there are Parish Councils who wish to apply for future schemes then contact your County Councillor in the first instance. For further information please see <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/parishpartnerships>

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## Key contacts for families

There's lots of support available for people at any stage of life. Here are some key contacts to help you and your family.

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### Just One Number

**0300 300 0123**

For any questions or worries you have about your child

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### Norfolk County Council

**0344 800 8020**

To report a safeguarding concern about an adult or child

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### ChatHealth

**07480 635060**

Secure text messaging advice service for 11-19-year-olds

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### Leeway refuge services

**0300 561 0077**

24-hour helpline for victims of domestic abuse

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### Age UK's Advice Line

**0800 678 1602**

Free confidential advice for older people and their families

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### First Response helpline

**111 (option 2)**

For people of all ages needing urgent mental health support

# Get in touch

## Contacting Norfolk County Council

[www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

**0344 800 8020**

Text Relay: **18001 0344 800 8020**

Post: **Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DH**

**0344** numbers are charged for just like **01** and **02**.

Information and access to all our customer services is also available at all our libraries.



# Do it online

You can find out about our services, report problems or apply for courses, school places and more at [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk) – here are just a few examples:

## **What is 'right up your street'?**

Search for local clubs, activities and services at [www.communitydirectory.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.communitydirectory.norfolk.gov.uk)

**Improving your home?** Find a trusted trader at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/trustedtrader](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/trustedtrader)

**De-cluttering?** Find your local recycling centre at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/recycling)

**Looking for a new school?** Find your child's catchment school or apply for a place at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/admissions)

**Want to check for local roadworks?** [www.norfolk.gov.uk/roadworks](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/roadworks)

**Has your concessionary bus pass been lost or stolen?** Pay for a replacement at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/concessionarytravel](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/concessionarytravel)

**Need help getting out and about?** [www.norfolk.gov.uk/communitytransport](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/communitytransport)

**Need to apply or reapply for a Blue Badge parking permit?** [www.norfolk.gov.uk/bluebadge](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/bluebadge)

**Renewing a library book?** [www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries)

**Need to report faulty street lighting?** [www.norfolk.gov.uk/streetlighting](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/streetlighting)

**Found an adult learning course you like?** Apply and pay for it online at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/adultlearning](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/adultlearning)

**Need to report a pothole?** [www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes)