

## **County Deal for Norfolk update**

At a full council meeting on 12 December 2023, Councillors accepted a £600 million devolution deal for Norfolk. The deal will also mean that decisions can be taken in Norfolk, for Norfolk.

The council voted to accept a county deal devolution agreement with the Government to transfer significant funding, powers and decisions to Norfolk.

Government funding will start transferring to Norfolk next summer if councillors vote in July 2024 to stage the first election for a leader in May 2025.

The full council agreed the following recommendations:

Council:

- Recognises the work carried out during 2023 to consult with the public, inform Members and prepare plans in relation to the 'in-principle' County Deal brought to Council in January this year
- Commends the work undertaken by the Leader and Officers to secure additional benefits for the Norfolk County Deal and resolves that the Deal should be accepted
- Agrees that the election for the Directly Elected Leader should be held alongside the county council elections in May 2025 to enable the widest possible engagement with the electorate
- Agrees that the resolution adopting the new governance arrangements should be brought to the Full Council meeting on 23 July 2024 to facilitate that election date

For more Info please look at County Deal for Norfolk webpages available [here](#).

[Watch a video statement from Cllr Mason Billig via YouTube](#)

## **Long Stratton Bypass update**

Delivery of a new bypass for Long Stratton moved another step closer to becoming a reality this week following confirmation from government of the legal orders needed to construct the new road.

In confirming the Side Roads Order, the Department for Transport has authorised Norfolk County Council to make the necessary changes to the existing highway that will allow the bypass to be built.

Norfolk County Council has worked in collaboration with South Norfolk Council (SNC) Norfolk Homes Ltd and Norfolk Land Ltd to develop proposals for the long-awaited bypass, which was granted full planning permission by SNC in September, along with the creation of 1,875 new homes, new employment land and a site for a new primary school.

The Greater Norwich Growth Board have also agreed arrangements with SNC for the forward funding of a £4.5m developer contribution, which is in addition to the up to £10m

Community Infrastructure Levy supported borrowing, they have already pledged to the project.

Following the initial preparation works, the target date for the main construction work to start on the bypass is Spring 2024 with an 18 month construction period and the road open to traffic by the end of 2025, subject to procurement and all statutory processes being met.

## **Children and Young People**

Children and young people in Norfolk who are at risk of harm from drugs and alcohol are to benefit from more targeted support to prevent substance misuse.

Norfolk County Council is increasing its funding for children and young people's drug and alcohol services by 20% to £1m per year.

The Council has just re-commissioned two services that support children and young people with substance misuse problems or living in homes with others with problematic substance misuse.

The [Matthew Project](#) will provide the enhanced services, after successfully bidding for the new contract.

## **Public Information request**

The Norfolk Coroner's Service are appealing for help to trace the family of a man who died at his home address earlier this month.

70-year-old Peter Kerrison who lived at an address in St Peters Close, Yaxham, Norfolk, died on Monday 11 December 2023.

There were no suspicious circumstances and despite carrying out extensive enquiries no next-of-kin have been identified.

Anyone with information relating to Mr Kerrison should contact the Coroner's Office on Norwich on 01603 774773

## **Government updates**

### **Housing and Regeneration - Brownfield Land Release Fund**

At the Spending Review 2021, the Chancellor announced a £1.8 billion package of investment to regenerate communities and level-up the country, unlocking new homes on derelict and underused brownfield land.

As part of this, Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 (BLRF2) funding was made available to all English councils to support the release of council-owned brownfield land for housing. Two rounds have already been completed. Government say that the latest round will release land for over 8,000 new homes by March 2028 - creating thousands of construction jobs and transforming underused sites into places where people want to live and work, while protecting cherished green spaces.

This third and final round is now open, offering up to £80 million for English councils to apply for through their One Public Estate partnerships.

OPE Partnerships and councils are strongly encouraged to work with their OPE Regional Team in developing their bids to make these as strong as possible.

Further details available [here](#). The closing date is 14 February 2024.

### **Ofsted statement following coroner's inquest**

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) have released a statement following the inquest into the suicide of Berkshire head teacher Ruth Perry, which is the first time Ofsted has been listed as a contributing factor in the death of a head teacher.

Ofsted said that they will work hard to address each of the areas of concern highlighted by the coroner. As a first step, all lead inspectors will be brought together with new training and a new complaints hotline will be set up for schools to report any concerns about their inspection to a senior Ofsted official.

Statement from Ofsted's Chief Inspector available [here](#).

### **National vaccination strategy**

NHS England, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Care, the UK Health Security Agency and other partners, has developed a strategic direction for the delivery of vaccination services, focussed on improving uptake and coverage of all vaccinations across the whole population whilst reducing disparities of uptake in underserved communities. To do so the [Vaccination Strategy](#), published on 13 December, aims to:

- simplify and streamline access to vaccinations, including extending online booking capability
- improve access for people who are currently underserved by offering vaccination through community-based, targeted approaches
- deliver vaccination through flexible, integrated, neighbourhood teams that can deliver other preventative interventions alongside vaccination

The strategy proposes that Integrated Care Boards have the responsibility and flexibility to deliver these aims through local vaccination delivery networks that are tailored to the needs of local people.

Link to the ministerial written statement available [here](#). Link to the strategy available [here](#).

### **Penalty notices introduced for animal health and welfare offences**

New legislation on 11 December introduced the option to issue fixed penalty notices for a range of animal health and welfare related offences.

From 1 January 2024, they will be added to the existing portfolio of enforcement measures, to protect animals and help ensure animal keepers follow the law. Owners will face penalties of up to £5,000, and serious animal welfare offences will still be prosecuted.

New [Statutory guidance](#) has also been published to help enforcement authorities with the implementation of penalty notices.

### **Environment - unlimited penalties introduced for those who pollute environment**

From 11 December 2023, companies who pollute the environment can be hit with unlimited financial penalties from the Environment Agency.

The previous £250,000 cap on Variable Monetary Penalties (VMPs) has been scrapped and the range of offences they cover has been expanded, meaning the Environment Agency has more tools with which to hold the water industry, and others, to account.

Further details available [here](#).

### **Voter ID - Voter authority certificate awareness update**

Last May was the first time in England that voters were required to produce a valid photo ID or voter authority certificate to be issued a ballot paper. The Electoral Commission's [statutory report into those elections](#), published in September, found that awareness of the certificate stood at 57% in May 2023, and only 25,000 certificates were used as a form of ID on polling day.

Speaking at a Lords' constitutional committee meeting on voter ID, Simon Hoare, Minister for Local Government agreed that everything possible should be done to make everybody who is in a position to vote aware, first, of the need for registration, and, secondly, of the possibility of applying for a certificate if they do not have other forms of photographic identification. He also said he was focusing on how he could get the awareness figure closer to 80% - 90%.

A transcript of the meeting is available [here](#).

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy/Healthy New Year.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

james