

# Blofield and Blofield Heath Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Blofield and Blofield Heath, held at the Blofield Courthouse on Thursday 27th March 2019 at 7.30pm.

## **PRESENT**

Rob Christie (Chair) and the Clerks, Sarah Osbaldeston and Melanie Eversfield presided. Blofield Parish Councillors present –Stella Shackle, Rob Christie, Paul Culley-Barber, Stuart Smith and Sarah Dhesi, Joseph Scholes, Pat Wilson, In total approximately 10 parishioners were present. County Councillor Andrew Proctor sent his apologies. District Councillor Frank O'Neill was present.

### **1. WELCOME**

Rob Christie, Chair of Blofield Parish Council Welcomes everyone.

### **2. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2018**

They were approved by all present and duly signed by the chair.

### **3. CHAIRMAN / COUNCIL'S REPORT** *(Rob Christie)*

#### **3.1. Report to the Annual Parish Meeting on the highlights of another busy year.**

The local council elections, including for parish councils, on 2 May mean that we are within a period of election purdah and I've been told to be careful what I say and avoid endorsing individuals who are candidates.

#### **Council**

We began and end the year with 1 vacancy, the year with the least changes.

#### **Neighbourhood Plan and Planning**

The Neighbourhood Plan policies continue to be part of the local planning guidance; they should be given weight by the Planning Authority and influence decisions, and the policies help the council when commenting on planning applications and considering issues.

In March 2018 Broadland DC maintained that it had an 8 year land-supply, using a revised assessment of the housing need. This meant that local planning policies were once again effective. In 2018 we saw a number of planning applications refused because they were not allocated sites and the planning authority was satisfied that they did not meet the sustainability criteria - and the application to build on land adjacent to the Memorial Hall in Brundall, which had implications for Blofield parishioners, was withdrawn.

Recently an appeal against one of the refusals was successful and the Inspector didn't accept that there was a five-year land supply, at least on the basis of the JCS. Costs were awarded against BDC. That probably means the parish will benefit from further applications on unallocated sites and/or outside the settlement limits. Interestingly another appeal on a Blofield application, heard by a different Inspector, was not successful and that decision indicates some support for the argument that there is a 5 year land-supply – but whether that will encourage BDC to maintain their view is debatable.

Every month the council is asked by BDC to comment on planning applications but we have no power of decision: we are asked for our views. We have been doing this in a full council meeting held to discuss planning matters, for about a year, and this has worked well. This means councillors are now asked to attend two meetings a month. The planning meeting is an opportunity for anyone to attend and comment on applications.

The Manor Park housing site was bought by Hopkins Homes with outline consent for 175 houses and in 2018 the parish council sought changes to the layout including many more parking spaces and better use made of the open spaces. Some changes were made but the

parish council was left with a major concern: the PF running from Yarmouth Road to the A47 where it crosses the dual-carriageway. The exit from the site onto the A47 is in an area of open space that will be used for informal play and the council was – and still is – concerned at the potential risks posed by that access onto the A47. We have been unable to generate any interest or concern from officers at BDC or NCC. Because of this the council decided not to accept the offer from Hopkins Homes to take ownership of the open spaces on the site and, as BDC won't take responsibility for this land, HH will put all the open space/common spaces into a management company which will be responsible for their upkeep.

We responded to the second phase of consultation on the Greater Norwich Local Plan which will run until 2036 and will set where economic development including housing is built. We now wait for the next draft of the GNLP and will continue to argue that the parish has more than its fair share of development.

Once again, I'm sorry for the length of this but planning and development is still a big issue in the parish and is unlikely to go away.

### **Finance**

We have again increased the precept this year. The finances are healthy, but we have increased commitments and costs and it makes sense to ensure the parish is properly resourced in the future. CIL money is coming to the parish from new-build houses but there are restrictions on how we use it; and improvements to parish facilities will mean increased upkeep and management costs. We are building up cash reserves, both to meet inevitable maintenance and repair costs, but also to help fund improvements to what we already have and by way of new projects.

### **Projects**

The council has a number of projects ongoing:

The footpath through churchyard has turned into a saga. The replacement gates were fitted in 2018. The details of the improvements to the footpath have been finalised with the Parochial Church Council and the Diocese; the works will be carried out shortly, all being well.

The council expected the new Community Land, nearly 2 hectares to the north of Wyngates, to be handed-over by Norfolk Homes late last year under the terms of the legal agreement between the company and Broadland DC. The land is for community use. The transfer has not happened yet. In summer 2017 NCC approached the parish council, in confidence, and asked if it was prepared to discuss how NCC might build a new primary school to serve the growing demand in Blofield, Brundall and Lingwood. The parish council was and is supportive of a new school. Progress has been slow and until now NCC has insisted that all discussions be treated as 'commercial – in confidence'. NCC will hold a community engagement event in May to explain its plans. In short: to build a new school in Blofield NCC needs to utilise land it owns between the surgery and the A47 and behind the surgery, and use part of the land being transferred by Norfolk Homes to the parish. To do this Norfolk Homes have to agree to vary the condition that the land is for community use only.

In return for the land NCC requires from the parish the council is seeking the current school field and adjacent area to make the land areas about equal. NCC have said that the Victorian school building is a 'Heritage Asset' so should be preserved - but they will seek some re-development of the current school site and a few bungalows on the access road to the new school. At the moment all we can add is to look out for news and in particular for the community engagement event on 23 May – and to comment on their proposals.

One project that has progressed is the acquisition of about 4 acres of meadow and marsh running from Bay Bridge to the footpath to Braydeston to be a conservation site with public access and enjoyment and linked to both the public footpath and the Cremers Meadow site in Brundall. The project has been greatly facilitated by BDC, in particular by their GI Officer Annie Sommazzi, and BDC has contributed to the purchase price, will contribute to the set-up costs, has paid the legal fees and has paid for site surveys. The availability of this Green Infrastructure funding was a big factor in the parish council voting unanimously to proceed after a public consultation and a council meeting well-attended by members of the public where no-one spoke against. The site will open to the public as soon as possible - but based

on the experience of Cremers Meadow in Brundall it may well take up to 18 months before it will be open. The parish council will be seeking a 'Friends of Marty's Marsh' group to help with the project and BDC will continue to provide support. Again, please look out for news on the website.

A47 dualling is having an impact on the allotments entrance. HE has relocated the contractors' compound and we expect the loss of land to be restricted to the current car park and a consequential loss of some of the top plots to create an access from the new car park. It was reasonably visible in HE's on-line 'fly-by' video produced for last summer's public consultation. The net loss will be limited and there will be a gain of a new and better car park. Another gain is that as a parish affected by a HE project we can apply to their community funds for help with local projects. We will make use of this and are starting with requests for financial support for replacement play equipment at MHH and at Heathlands and towards creating public access and footpaths at Marty's Marsh.

The parish council voted to support Heathlands' current project when it was approached for help by the management committee. The council agreed to fund the shortfall between the final contract price and the BLF grant plus Heathland's funds. This gap was about £13k and the council's decision enabled BLF to finalise their grant at over £200k.

Establishing a Public Right of Way in Hillhouse Lane/Clarks Loke in Blofield Heath is ongoing. NCC Rights of Way team said it may take 2 years to conclude so there's another year or so to go.

Discussions with the management committees of Heathlands, the Courthouse and the Margaret Harker Hall have taken place to explore whether there are:

- ways of improving and extending the facilities to help accommodate increased demand as a result of the new housing, or
- essential works required to maintain the current provision which could be funded, wholly or in part, from the CIL.

To help with this process the council has re-appointed the consultant who supported the parish Neighbourhood Plan to undertake community engagement over the coming months. The aim is to establish what residents want to be able to do within the village, what the current facilities – halls and open spaces – can provide, and how any gaps might be filled. This should bring us closer to having a range of options. We can then consult and see what residents prefer before making decisions. Clearly there will be a lot of work for voluntary groups, and the councillors, to bring projects forward and BDC has offered help and support from Sally Hoare, a BDC officer.

In response to local requests the council proposed a trod linking Blofield Heath with Dyes Road under the 2018 Parish Partnership scheme run by NCC. Half the cost is met by NCC which makes the project attractive. The application was successful and the detailed design was finalised - but the works have been delayed by NCC Highways. They should be done this year.

We are still concerned by the future of Plantation Wood. The planned improvements to the A47 at N. Burlingham meant that HE were unable to proceed with any land disposal in the locality. We hope that once the N. Burlingham route is finalised, probably later this year, it may be possible to revive the disposal and seek funding for a purchase from one of HE's community funds. In effect HE would pay themselves which we hope might look attractive to them.

### **Acknowledgements**

Our District Councillor, Frank O'Neill, has been very supportive, particularly with planning issues. It has been good to have a ward councillor taking an interest in our parish; I can say this despite the election purdah as Frank is retiring from BDC in May. Our County Councillor and now Leader of NCC, Andrew Proctor, has been very helpful and supportive. I'll repeat what I said last year: the difference their input can make is significant and a bit depressing as it shouldn't need the involvement of an elected councillor to get the attention of a local authority.

Because of the election rules I can't thank individual councillors but I do want say

thank you to those who have been able to work on projects and issues over the year and to those who are standing down in May.

Last – but not least: our Assistant Clerk returned to work in January after the birth of a son and we were very pleased to have Melanie back. We were very grateful to Sarah, our Clerk, for the additional work she put in last winter. We are fortunate to have such a good team.

### **Conclusion**

I'm sure I've missed things. Sorry.

As always, we can do some things better, perhaps most obviously our communications. We've made changes but no-one ever gets that 'right' and there will always be room for improvement.

I'll end by reminding everyone that the council stands down on May 1st and nominations will close shortly for the election on the 2nd. Some, but not all, of the current councillors will stand again and it would be good to have a full complement of councillors after May 2. So, anyone who wants to help make the village an even better place to live, and help decide how the council spends perhaps £750,000 of CIL over the next few years, should fill in a nomination form before it is too late. We had an election last time and I see it as a healthy sign if there are more people willing to be councillors than there are seats and the costs of an election as money well-spent.

Thank you.

## **4. Blofield Court House Report (Robin bunce)**

- 4.1. The Court House has two main sources of revenue – hirings and Village Screen. We lost two long-term regular users this year, a dance class and, sadly, Poppies Cafe that closed due to the ill-health of the organiser. However, we are pleased to report that we have two new hirers of the hall, one of which started this month with the other beginning in April.
- 4.2. We started showing films at the Court House in April 2009 so this year is our tenth anniversary. During that time we have staged 169 performances of 83 different films to just over 7,000 paying customers. We produced a special booklet to celebrate our anniversary and if anyone would like a copy they are available tonight. I'm pleased to say that our Village Screen films continue to be popular and we have had good attendances this year at films such as "The Bookshop", "Darkest Hour" and "Mamma Mia: Here we go again". We also organised two Jazz evenings that produced small surpluses. Overall, the Court House remains in a strong financial position.
- 4.3. Improvements to the Court House during the year included:
  - Re-pointing of damaged brickwork;
  - Provision of a water supply and outside tap to the garden area; and
  - Re-decoration and carpeting of the cell block corridor. This included re-hanging the door from the hall so that it opens into the corridor thus providing another emergency exit from the hall; some signage is still required.
- 4.4. Next year's major project is the repair of three windows and re-painting of all exterior woodwork and guttering including the cupola.

## **5. Heathlands Community Centre Report (Claire Norton)**

- 5.1. I concluded my report last year by saying that perhaps we will be celebrating the opening of the refurbishment of Heathlands. Well, that was almost right, but we will have to wait until July when the works are due to be completed.
- 5.2. 2018 has been a year of an unbelievable amount of form filling to finalise the funding with the Big Lottery. We received 3 tenders out of the 5 that were invited and the 2 lowest received were reasonably close and competitive. Our Quantity Surveyor then had to analyse these and send yet another report to the Lottery. On 21st January this year we were actually given the go-ahead to accept the lowest tender, but we still had to demonstrate that we could close the funding gap.
- 5.3. As you may remember, we had a shortfall of £32,000. We applied to the Big Lottery for additional funding and they eventually agreed to increase our grant by £18,500. Your

Parish Council has kindly agreed (hopefully) to fund the final balance in the region of £13,500. Therefore, on behalf of Heathlands Management Committee, I would like to record our grateful thanks to your Parish Council for this kind offer which we required to satisfy the Big Lottery.

- 5.4. It has taken over 4 years to reach this point and I cannot tell you what a relief it is to know we have all the funding in place. The total project is in excess of £250, 000 and we would like to think Mr Snelling, who gave us the initial kick start by leaving us £50, 000 in his will, will think that all this money will be spent wisely and bring Heathlands into the 21st Century.
- 5.5. Whilst the refurbishment has been the major project on everybody's mind this year and although we have this huge amount of money from the Lottery, Heathlands has still had to continue to fund raise as normal. We have to find over £50,000 every year just to run the centre which is a huge amount of money and again we are grateful to the Parish Council for their continued support.
- 5.6. We continue to have our Jumble sales, Beer festivals, the Christmas Fair, Jack & Jills Tea and Chat, Bingo and the Garage Sale. The Open Garden and Wine Tasting, which we share with Hemblington Church, all add to our funds. We still have Keep-Fit, Zumba, Brownies, Short mat bowls, Badminton and a host more. The Monday Luncheon Club is as popular as ever and Pre-School has a full compliment. Fiona has now added "Messy Mushrooms" on a Friday morning, which again is well attended. The replacement of the Under 5's play area is still on the agenda but this is with the Parish Council at the moment. We understand we will have to wait to hear of any developments of this.
- 5.7. The biggest event that Heathland put on last year, which we shared with the Church, was the celebration of the end of World War 1. The war to end all wars. The day started sharp at 6am at the Church with Bag Pipes, followed by breakfast and the day ended 13 hours later at Heathlands, with Lilly Barns, who is perhaps the oldest resident in Blofield Heath, lighting the national Beacon to the sound of the "Last Post" at precisely 7pm. It was a full day, packed with events and all the red poppies displayed on the wall at Heathlands still remain. We see no reason for them to be removed, perhaps it will make us still remember them.
- 5.8. With all these events, the Social Club still remains as our main "Fund Raising Arm" and we are all excited to see the refurbishment works have started which includes a new insulated roof, new windows and doors and really looking forward to July when hopefully we may even have a little celebration to mark the completion.
- 5.9. To end my report this year, we are still conscious that Mr Jenkinson has never built out his latest approved scheme for 4 plots, so we can only assume he is waiting to pounce at the appropriate time for his 24 dwellings again.
- 5.10. Finally, as every year, I have to say thank you to your Parish council for your continued support throughout the year and particularly the extra funding that you have kindly offered to help us with this year.

## **6. MARGARET HARKER HALL REPORT (Sarah Russen)**

- 6.1. Good Evening Mr. Chairman, Members of the Parish Council and members of the Public.
- 6.2. This the yearly report from the Margaret Harker Hall, Blofield for 2018-2019.
- 6.3. This year has been another good one for us, we continue to offer a good facility for the village and with the ``Green area `` to play on. This area is greatly appreciated by anyone who uses the area, even from outside the village.
- 6.4. The other facilities, i.e. Scouts, and Blofield Tennis Club, are doing well and have a full register of members.
- 6.5. The main users continue to carry on and do well for the hall, financially. We have little room to manoeuvre for extra hirings, which is good, as we still require time for any minor jobs and cleaning to take place.
- 6.6. Over this last year the Sub-Committee have worked very hard to lay out a ``Wish List Plan`` for the Margaret Harker Hall, Blofield, to forward to the Parish Council for further discussion and to have a parish Consultation to take place in the Summer time. This includes new playground areas, new car parking areas, extension to the original building and other ideas. We will be awaiting the Consultation results.

- 6.7. Due to the resignation of the Chair, Mrs. S. Russen at the end of December 2018, there was a big push to find villagers to assist on the Committee. With a good response, the Committee was able to recruit several people to take on responsibilities for the Chair's position, Secretary's position, and other places. This was a great achievement and I would like to take this opportunity to say ``Thank You`` to the parish Council and the M.H.H Committee for their assistance in this, and wish the new members good luck in the future. The new Chairman is: Mr. Julian Rudd.
- 6.8. I would also like to take this time to say ``Thank You`` to the Parish Council for their support over the last year and the Villagers, who without their support this facility would not be able to continue.
- 6.9. This brings me to the end of my report for 2018-2019.

## **7. BLOFIELD ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION REPORT (RICHARD CODLING)**

- 7.1. It has been another successful year down on the allotment plots.
- 7.2. During the year we had a few people give up their plots but we have now let all plots apart from the top row. This is because we do not know if highways England will be compulsory purchasing them.
- 7.3. We have been in contact with highways England and are going to meet with them on site in couple of weeks to get an update.
- 7.4. We hold regular work parties on the site. At our recent one we spot filled pot-holes in the car park, cut the main hedge, upgraded the water supply pipe and had a general tidy up.
- 7.5. We have also had a great working relationship with the parish council and attend quarterly meetings with them.
- 7.6. The allotments continue to be a valuable asset for the residents of Blofield. They provide a place where you can exercise, socialise and grow lovely organic vegetables.

## **8. Footpath Warden Report (Yvonne burton)**

- 8.1. The footpaths were walked in Summer 2018 and issues raised with NCC Hihgways have been resolved and repaired; including fingerposts. Footpaths 5&7 are obstructed at present on the Hopkins homes site but will be reinstated shortly.

## **9. Keep Blofield Special Report (provided by Peter Mackness and read by the clerk Sarah Osbaldeston)**

- 9.1. Keep Blofield Special is a small group of volunteers who undertake litter picking for an hour or so twice per month in our two villages. An average of seven people participate, thus the villages get 24 days' attention per year.
- 9.2. The past twelve months have been no better and no worse for litter than previous years, the majority of litter as usual being food packaging, drink cans and take-away food packaging. We regularly use the online Broadland Fly tipping Form to report the occasional item that is too large for us to deal with and would comment that Broadland's service is excellent.
- 9.3. KBS have continued with maintenance of the various benches around the village which usually require just a light sanding and the application of wood preservative. These benches are still in good condition and the maintenance should keep them in good order for some years to come.
- 9.4. The bank between the Library and Blofield School which was cleared and planted by KBS three or four years ago has matured nicely and is especially attractive in Spring. It is regularly maintained and provides summer and autumn colour too.
- 9.5. The Spring daffodils donated five years ago and planted at the various entrances to the villages continue to bloom and add to the pleasant aspect of Blofield and Blofield Heath.
- 9.6. KBS keeps an eye on the few public spaces in the villages, especially Town Pit in Blofield Heath, and works with the Parish Council if attention is needed at any time. There will be a need for some clearing of the pond in Blofield Heath in 2019, the scale of work is beyond what we can undertake ourselves so the Parish Council will probably need to consider some contract or professional help.

9.7. KBS is happy to help keep our two villages looking attractive and will always welcome suggestions and new members. It is a very informal group of people and can be contacted via the Parish Clerk.

**10. Tree Wardens Report (David Pilch)**

- 10.1. The parish tree wardens are David Pilch and Richard Codling.
- 10.2. It has been an interesting year for Broadland Tree Wardens with the end of the scheme by Broadland District Council (BDC). However BDC has supported the setting up of a free standing Broadland Tree Warden Network to continue the work. This network is chaired by Ernest Hoyos, the secretary is John Fleetwood and Richard Codling is the treasurer.
- 10.3. The Parish Council has given the new organisation its whole hearted support and by signing up can continue to have access to new trees which will continue to be available from BDC. Moreover your tree wardens can continue to ensure the sustainability and well being of the trees in the parish.
- 10.4. In addition to being aware of the implication to trees of planning applications the tree wardens have carried out a number of tasks this year.
  - 1:- 13 oak trees have been planted on field banks at Heath Farm, Bond's Road.
  - 2:- 5 apple trees planted in the community orchard.
  - 3:- Remaining debris from tree and hedge clearing removed from the bottom of the "new" churchyard. Snowdrops were transplanted to the cleared area from the path of the planned footpath works.
  - 4:- Lower branches were trimmed from oak on Bonfire Green where they were overhanging the seat and obscuring the view for drivers.
  - 5:- Both tree wardens attended a training session on TPO legislation at BDC.

**11. BLOFIELD ORCHARD CONSERVATION GROUP (RICHARD CODLING)**

- 11.1. We have had another very busy year in the Orchard and after 5 years it is beginning to look more established and productive. In the spring and summer we offered grafting instruction to members and to the public. In May the Orchard was open to the public on Sundays when the blossom was out and walks were offered by members.
- 11.2. We were able to sell young local apple trees and offered identification of fruit combined with some home visits to help interested local people.  
For a second year we had a local teenager work for his Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme in the Orchard.
- 11.3. We now have 1 bee hive in the Orchard and several members of the group paid for themselves to attend a Bee keeping course. We have planted more wild flowers and hope this will increase the chances of bees, which are under a serious threat, to survive, and to increase pollination of the trees.
- 11.4. We received a substantial grant from a local firm which enabled us to purchase a shed. This was erected by the members and is a welcome addition to the orchard as we can now store items on site.
- 11.5. Our big public event was Apple Day held 9 Oct at North Burlingham. We displayed and sold local apple varieties, offered identification and organised apple related games. We also demonstrated juicing which was, as always especially popular, hands on, with the children.
- 11.6. We have tried to raise public awareness of the group by regular adverts in Focal Point. Parish Magazine. Apple Day is advertised also by an interview on Radio Norfolk, and posters locally.
- 11.7. We have contact with the Broadland Tree Warden Group who have donated 5 trees of different local varieties. This brings the total of trees in the Orchard to (all Norfolk varieties) Apples 48, Pears 5, Gages 2 and Cherries 2.
- 11.8. The notice board is now erected and contains a hand painted map of the trees done by one of our members. It is essential for displaying ongoing information and events.
- 11.9. The Orchard continues to provide in addition to its purpose of conserving local varieties and skills, an excellent social and physical opportunity for members to contribute to a sound local project.

11.10. Our chief concern now is the future of the Orchard, its access and facilities when work starts on the A47 improvements.

**12. Blofield Fuel Charity Report (Brenda Dawson)**

12.1. The charity owns 37 acres on Blofield Corner Road, let out to two farmers who pay rent twice a year. In September notices for applications are put in the church magazine and Focal Point and two post offices. Forms are collected from the two post offices and then I collect them at the end of October, sort them out and then have a meeting with the trustees to decide what amount they can receive. The money is used to give the elderly people (over 65) in the village fuel allowance at Christmas. It used to be coal but is now money. Generally, about £50 is paid if you live alone or for a couple £40. Last year's money has not been paid yet as forms are not filled in correctly and the clerk has to chase for missing information.

**13. BLOFIELD RELIEF IN NEED CHARITY (received from REVD. KEVIN BILSON, read by Sarah Osbaldeston)**

**14. REVE FOUNDATION REPORT (received from REVD. KEVIN BILSON, read by Sarah Osbaldeston)**

14.1. These two charities are combined. The trustees of these charities meet biannually. At the last meeting in November 2018 balances available to these Charities amounted to a combined total of £743. Six written applications for grants had been received. After careful consideration of the applications, three awards were made totalling £450. The trustees feel it is important to keep a small balance available in the accounts for emergency requests on the funds.

**15. Speed watch report (Paul Culley-Barber)**

15.1. Paul reported that he is still looking for more volunteers and has struggled to carry out regular sessions with the lack of volunteers.

**16. Blofield Church report (Kevin Bilson)**

16.1. No Church Report has been received.

**17. County and District Councilors' Report (Andrew Proctor / Frank O'Neill)**

17.1. Frank O'Neill provided a verbal update and detailed report of the work at Broadland District Council throughout the year. (See Appendix A).

**17.2. Norfolk County Council Annual Report 2018/19 (provided by Andrew Proctor read by Rob Christie)**

[The 2019/20 budget](#)

In February 2019 Norfolk County Council agreed a £409 million revenue budget for 2019-20. This budget is balanced, is robust and allocates our resources across Norfolk's people and communities in the best way we can, while protecting the frontline services the people of Norfolk rely on so dearly.

The Council's Government funding has reduced by a total of £204m between 2010/11 and 2018/19 and its revenue support grant will fall from £39m to zero in 2020/21. During this period, the council has made savings of £364m, including efficiency savings of £246m. This has resulted in the difficult but necessary decision to increase the County Council's share of Council Tax by 2.99% this year.

The key points of the budget are:

- A £409m net revenue budget – representing the Council Tax income which contributes to running the council and its services
- The Council's share of band D bills will rise to £1,362.24 from April.

- Savings of £31.6m in 2019/20, rising to a total of £79.4m over the next three years
- Examples of increased investment from April include £6m to address growing demand on adult social services, and £14.5m to tackle pressures on the looked-after children service

### [Caring for your infrastructure](#)

#### **£12.7m road improvement schemes nearing completion**

In November 2018 Norfolk received an additional £12.694m from the Government to spend on road maintenance.

To date 125,000m<sup>2</sup> of worn out highway surface has been removed and replaced with 26,600 tonnes of brand new asphalt.

#### **Funding success for Greater Norwich transport bid**

Greater Norwich has been awarded £6.1m by the Department for Transport, following a successful bid in the first round of Transforming Cities funding.

Transport for Norwich put forward eight sustainable transport schemes and applied for a £7.3m contribution from the £60m pot. Of these, six were awarded money.

For more information about the project and full details of the newly-funded projects, please visit [www.norfolk.gov.uk/transformingcities](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/transformingcities).

#### **Delivering the Western Link**

The County Council is proposing to create a Norwich Western Link to improve travel between the A47 and Broadland Northway (formerly the Northern Distributor Road) and tackle transport problems in the area.

The council published four shortlisted options for a Norwich Western Link - three new dual carriageway roads and a single carriageway upgrade to the B1535

The council is aiming to start construction on the Norwich Western Link in late 2022.

For more information about the project visit [www.norfolk.gov.uk/nwl](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/nwl).

#### **Norfolk ranked fourth in national highways and transport survey**

Norfolk has been ranked fourth out of 28 similar councils in a national independent survey which looks at satisfaction with highways and transport services.

The highest scores for the county were for traffic levels and congestion, and the condition of roads and footpaths. These are all things that people consistently say are important to them and in which Norfolk is ranked strongly compared to other councils.

Altogether 113 local authorities signed up for the 2018 survey. Out of the 28 county councils and larger unitary authorities in the peer group, Norfolk ranked in the top 10 for:

- Condition of highways
- Highway maintenance
- Public transport info
- Ease of access (for disabled people)

- Local bus services
- Community transport
- Pavements and footpaths
- Cycle routes and facilities
- Traffic levels and congestion
- Management of roadworks
- Traffic management

## **Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing**

Norfolk County Council has awarded the contract for Great Yarmouth's Third River Crossing to BAM Farrans – a joint venture between two construction industry leaders.

Following a competitive tender process, BAM Farrans will now be working with the project team at the county council to finalise the detailed design and construction requirements for the bridge.

So far, £98m of funding from the Department for Transport has been awarded to Norfolk County Council towards the anticipated £120m cost of the project.

For more information about the Third River Crossing, please visit [www.norfolk.gov.uk/3rc](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/3rc).

## **£11m boost for broadband in Norfolk**

Thousands more homes and businesses in Norfolk will be able to access Superfast Broadband thanks to Norfolk County Council securing an extra £11m funding.

Currently 92% of homes and businesses have access to download speeds of 24Mbps+ per second. The Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) programme is set to deliver 95% coverage across the county by the end of March 2020, but the council is not content to stop there.

BBfN rollout started in July 2013 when 42% of Norfolk properties had access to Superfast broadband. The new contract is expected to be signed early this year (2019).

To find out if superfast broadband is available in your area, visit [www.betterbroadbandnorfolk.co.uk](http://www.betterbroadbandnorfolk.co.uk).

## **[Caring for your economy](#)**

### **Our approach to improving mobile phone signals recognised as national best practice**

Norfolk County Council has received national praise in Parliament for its approach to improving mobile phone signals in the county.

The Council's Digital Innovation and Efficiency Committee commissioned a survey earlier this year on mobile signals across the county. The results were used to create an interactive map and more than 200 council owned sites have now been identified in areas of poor mobile reception. These are being offered to mobile operators as potential sites for new masts.

### **Full Fibre boost for Norfolk businesses**

Norfolk County Council secured £8m from the UK Government Digital, Culture, Media & Sport department's Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) fund.

The £8m funding is part of an £11m programme to upgrade more than 370 of Norfolk's public-sector buildings to the latest ultrafast connection speeds. It will enable 230 schools, 108 Norfolk County Council Corporate buildings (including 38 libraries) and 34 fire stations to be upgraded to gigabit (1,000 mbps) fibre internet connections within two years.

Norfolk businesses can also apply to a voucher scheme that will provide up to £2,500 per business to fund their connection and pay the first-year running costs.

### [Caring for your children and families](#)

#### **New Early Childhood and Family Service**

This year we launched our new Early Childhood and Family Service. We believe this will have greater reach to those more isolated children and families in need of help and advice, through increased local support, easier to access information and crucial outreach work while continuing to deliver services previously offered.

This commitment means adapting the way we deliver services in response to the changing needs of Norfolk's children and young people. This transformative approach is one we are implementing across all our services.

We will be moving, not removing, some services into libraries, nurseries and community centres, alongside our 15 new service bases. Crucially, this more efficient use of infrastructure means money can be invested on delivering the services that we know are needed and valued by you to a greater number of children and young people, across Norfolk.

#### **£120m investment special school places**

Norfolk County Council will be investing £120m in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision in the County

In March 2019 we secured Government funding of up to £17m to build a new 170 place school in the county for children aged 3-19 with complex needs.

We proposed plans to create more than 500 extra school places, in four new special schools plus specialist bases at mainstream schools.

We have approved an initial investment of £4.8m in the current financial year, to allow the first phase of work to begin as quickly as possible.

A new special school, specialising in social, emotional and mental health, is likely to be the first project to get underway. The school will be developed on the former Alderman Swindell School site, in Great Yarmouth.

#### **New homes for care leavers open after £5m investment**

The first of 11 homes for Norfolk's care leavers has opened this year, following £5m of investment from Norfolk County Council.

The County Council has worked with young people to make sure that the accommodation meets their needs and four of the homes are now finished.

When finished there will a total of 25-30 beds across the 11 properties.

Without the new properties the young people would need to live in residential care or in placements with another provider, at a cost of up to £6,500 per week. The new homes ensure they have the right support, are able to learn to live in communities in a supported way and reduce the overall cost to the Council.

## Adult Social Care

### **New services to help ensure no lonely day in Norfolk**

People affected by loneliness and social isolation in Norfolk can now turn to a comprehensive range of new services for help and support.

The new services include a county-wide network of “Life Connectors” who work directly with people to provide coaching, practical advice and support to help people make and maintain relationships and strong links within their community.

The new services include outreach, promoting volunteering opportunities and benefits, asset mapping and addressing rural issues such as transport and use of technology in order to support people to become and stay well-connected in their local area.

### **Celebrating the launch of the Carers Charter**

The Carers Charter was launched on 30 November at County Hall.

The event coincided with Carers Rights Day, a national campaign which brings unpaid carers, organisations and local communities together to help carers understand their rights.

The adoption of the Charter by the County Council is a bold, innovative and radical move designed to improve the lives of carers. They constitute an enormous and largely hidden resource saving the public purse billions of pounds a year.

For more information visit [carersmatternorfolk.org.uk](http://carersmatternorfolk.org.uk)

### **We are investing £29m in Housing with Care**

This year we announced £29m capital investment scheme to deliver 3,000 extra homes for older people in Norfolk over the next ten years.

Norfolk requires 2,842 extra care units by 2028.

Increasing the provision of extra care housing to match future demand will deliver approximately £4m gross revenue saving per year.

The Living Well Homes for Norfolk Strategy and Position Statement can be found here ([www.norfolk.gov.uk/livingwellhomes](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/livingwellhomes)).

### **18. To hear and discuss any matters raised by members of the public**

18.1. Various matters were raised by the public and answered the council members present.

### **19. Closing comments by the Chair Rob Christie**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:15pm. And refreshments were served.