



Latest update on events from your County Councillor Tom FitzPatrick

Helhoughton Parish Council

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Norfolk County Council updates

Recycling Centre Booking System

From November this year, customers visiting recycling centres will need to book a slot before they arrive. The County Council has recently published some information about this on our website to explain how this will work and why it is being introduced. You can find out more here <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/recyclingcentres>

From the middle of September, we will start communicating this in more detail for our residents and customers, and information is currently being produced to support this communications strategy. If there are any early questions about this service which are not yet covered on the website, please contact waste.management@norfolk.gov.uk

Scrutiny and Governance Working Group

As well as a number of other committees, I sit on the Scrutiny and Governance Working Group which has been set up to consider the recommendations from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) as to the best structure for scrutiny and governance arrangements in the Council, focusing on where capacity, responsibilities and culture might be strengthened. Members are reviewing how the County Council's scrutiny arrangements can best reflect the principles set out in the Scrutiny Protocol and the English Devolution Accountability Framework and we are also considering a programme for Member briefings, training, and development to support any scrutiny and governance changes that are proposed.

Battery warning after Norfolk house fire

Residents across Norfolk are being reminded of the importance of buying lithium-ion batteries for a range of everyday devices only from reputable and safe retailers, to ensure they meet UK safety standards and aren't a fire risk.

As a Safety Bill about the rechargeable batteries is due to go before the House of Lords on Friday (6 September 2024), Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service and Norfolk County Council's Trading Standards team is investigating a house fire which is believed to have been started by a battery which was charging.

The occupants of the house in Bowthorpe managed to escape the fire last Tuesday evening, and a subsequent fire investigation has concluded that the fire started with the battery, purchased from an online retailer, and charger.

[More details](#)

[Find out more about how to stay safe with lithium batteries.](#)

[Find out more about the national battery safety campaign.](#)

[Read more about the Lithium-ion battery safety bill.](#)

Work to begin on new Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital roundabout

Residents who use the hospital should be aware that improvements are due to be made on the main Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital roundabout through an upcoming developer-led scheme.

Work on the £1 million-plus scheme is scheduled to start on Monday 9 September and will last for around six months. The work will see improved pedestrian and cycle access to the hospital and nearby research park, alongside the installation of a new Toucan crossing.

The developer is leading the project, with certain elements delivered in partnership with Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council. This partnership approach has enabled the improvements to be delivered as a single scheme, reducing disruption to road users during the work.

The roundabout will remain open during the majority of the scheme. Colney Lane East - which leads to the hospital from Round House Way - will be closed to traffic for four weeks in early 2025. During this closure, alternative access to the hospital will be via Hethersett Lane and Rosalind Franklin Road, which provides a direct route to the multi-storey car park and the hospital access road.

Norfolk joins call for urgent reform to support children with SEND

Norfolk County Council is calling on the government to urgently reform education and funding for children with special educational needs and disabilities, amid national pressures on a "broken system."

A report to Norfolk County Council's Cabinet reveals that despite significant investment and more than 2,000 extra specialist places being developed, the

council, schools and academies are struggling to meet unprecedented demand and the ring-fenced schools' budget, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), is continuing to overspend.

The forecast cumulative deficit on the DSG is now estimated to be £115m by March 2025.

Cabinet continues to lobby government for reform and for funding to support a more inclusive education system.

National updates

Levelling up projects to be reviewed by new Government

Local growth Minister Alex Norris [has confirmed that existing projects](#) as part of the Levelling Up Fund will be reviewed by Government before the budget on 30 October.

The Levelling Up Fund has come under fire from the current Government whilst they were still in opposition for being ineffective, both in terms of the administration of the fund (with it being a competitive bidding pot) as well as the slowness of the funding (as of Spring 2024, only 10% of the fund had been spent).

Household support fund extended by 6 months

The Household Support Fund has again been extended for another 6 months, the Government's work and pensions Secretary [has confirmed](#).

The extension will cost the Government £421 million and will go to councils to help them support the most vulnerable who are struggling with household bill costs, such as food and energy.

With over 60% of local authorities considering ending the support they provide to vulnerable households, the funding has allowed for an extra six months of support. The LGA has reacted positively to the announcement, highlighting the targeted support that local authorities are able to provide, especially for the most vulnerable cohort of people who may fall through the gaps of other support schemes.

Ofsted calls for tighter controls on profiteering within children's homes

Ofsted wants to tackle excessive profit-making by private-equity owned children's homes, [as part of wider efforts](#) to strengthen the regulation and inspection of children's social care.

In response to a major consultation, the inspectorate said new legislation should regulate profit-making by large groups of children's care providers, to "make sure their decisions are made in children's best interests and not solely for profit".

The consultation also highlights a number of other proposed changes, which recognise the growing pressures on the education and social care space and are designed to alleviate rather than add to these pressures where possible.

Government setting up Shadow Great British Railways

The Transport Secretary, the Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP, is instructing the CEO of Network Rail, the Director General for Rail Services in the Department for Transport, and the CEO of DfT OLR Holdings Ltd (DOHL) [to establish a Shadow Great British Railways](#), which will see the main organisations responsible for the operational railway work together in closer collaboration.

This partnership is being established in advance of the official establishment of Great British Railways, which will require primary legislation to be passed through the Houses of Parliament.

Tom FitzPatrick

Vice Chairman of Norfolk County Council

County Councillor for Fakenham Division

(Dunton, Fakenham [Lancaster North and South], Helhoughton, Hempton with Pudding Norton & Testerton, Raynham and Tattersett)