

Budget and weather still headlines

The range of financial pressures currently faced, especially the rising demand for children's and adults' social care, which they say are contributing to unmanageable bills. It also highlights the costs involved in the delivery of services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and home-to-school transport.

The increasing levels of homelessness which have require us to spend more on fulfilling our responsibilities to those requiring support.

NHS Pharmacy First launched

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The NHS said that 90% of community chemists have registered to provide the new service and it will free up around 10 million GP appointments a year.

Patients can access the new service by walking straight into a chemist or being referred by NHS 111, urgent treatment centres, emergency departments or their GP. Those who are not registered with a GP can still access the service.

The scheme is part of the NHS and government's primary care access recovery plan.

Launch a national marketing campaign from mid-February 2024, which will encourage the public to access advice and treatment from community pharmacy services for common conditions.



This February our libraries across the county are hosting DigiFest, with free workshops for children and young people aged 0-14.

Get hands on with robots, learn coding skills, produce animated short films or create fabulous 3D designs. There is something to inspire everyone.

Look out for old favourites like Code-a-Pillar and Botley, along with brand-new sessions like Artie 3000, the robot that can draw, and Let's Go Code, a physical game that teaches you to think like a robot.

[Digifest](#), which aims to inspire the next generation of coders and creators, is back for 2024!

Digifest forms part of [Norfolk County Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy](#) and helps children and young people (CYP) with the use of creative digital technologies, aiming to inspire them to pursue a future career in a digital industry.

Libaries

Have free wifi

Warm rooms with a warm drink

Throughout February, there will be a huge variety of free events and workshops taking place across Norfolk's libraries for children and young people (CYP) aged four to 14. They are being encouraged to try their hand at stop-motion animation, learn basic coding skills with different robots, create with 3D pens and more.

In Norwich, Adult Learning will host 3D printing sessions, and the UEA School of Psychology will run a fun activity with their innovative eye-tracking technology. At the end of the month, local games professional Susi Bauer will draw Digifest to a close by delivering an engaging career talk for older children and young people at Millennium Library, covering jobs in the games industry.

Special partner sessions have also been scheduled across the county, including Lego™ robotics sessions with [ICT Solutions](#), Norfolk's experts in introducing children to new technology.

"Making sure that everyone in Norfolk is digitally included is a top priority for the council. We know that as a rural county we need to work hard to connect people together, and young people joining in Digifest will help to encourage them into the vital digital jobs of the future."

The free workshops will run throughout the month with the aim of sparking interest in technology among Norfolk's youngest residents.

Alongside Digifest, Norfolk Libraries offer a whole host of digital initiatives for all ages, including:

- A suite of apps, such as Press Reader, which allows readers to access digital versions of magazines and newspapers, and [Libby](#), which allows readers to borrow digital copies of books
- Digital Health Hubs which give people one-to-one support to get access to online health services
- The National Databank, which provides adults in need with six-months of free data via a SIM card
- A team of Digital Champions who help people, usually one-to-one, to improve their computer skills
- Code Clubs and Robotics Clubs
- Laptops to Loan, an initiative which allows over 18s with a full library membership to borrow a laptop for up to six weeks at a time
- Safe and welcoming study spaces - including extended 'Open Library' access during unstaffed hours
- [Theory Test Pro](#) (free simulation of driving theory test including official practice questions, hazard perception videos and online version of the Highway code)
- Volunteering opportunities

Bus pass

From 1 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.

It ensures they have access to work, education and leisure and helps to combat the risks of social isolation which can be associated with having a disability. In addition, encouraging more use of public transport leads to a greener future and helps towards our ambitious net-zero targets."

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 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.

To explore events taking place across Norfolk's libraries throughout Digifest, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/digifest

Alternatively, join your local library and explore everything they have to offer by visiting www.norfolk.gov.uk/jointhelibrary

The budget must take into account spending in the previous year and particularly where we have had unexpected expenses.

Children's Services and Adult services are the largest and most difficult to predict

This year the storms we had at the end of last year are going to significantly affect our next budget!

The flooding caused by the storms will require cleaning, repairs, and restoration over the start of this year adding to budget pressures.

Adult Social Services will be starting consultation about changes to the charging policy which includes the Minimum Income Guarantee, on Monday February 19th.

The department is working on the consultation process and materials to ensure the consultation is thorough and gives ample opportunity for people to feedback their views. The consultation will be available on the council's consultation hub, and we will also make sure we write directly to people receiving care who may be affected by changes. The consultation is accessible and available in alternative formats for people who need them, and we anticipate will last at least 14 weeks (this includes 5 weeks for the pre-election period)

We recognise that this is an issue of high concern for many people - particularly those who could be directly affected - and Members may receive a lot of correspondence about it. My team would like to extend an offer of help to any Member who may want, if this is the case please send a copy of the original message together with your acknowledgement to mp.correspondence@norfolk.gov.uk. A small group of people are working with Adult Social Care colleagues to respond to individuals on my behalf.

Children and Young People: Post-16 Travel Scheme Consultation

Norfolk County Council has launched a public consultation as part of its annual review of its Post-16 Transport Policy Statement. The consultation focuses upon their [Post-16 Travel Scheme](#) that offers subsidised travel for eligible students aged between 16-18 years old, as well as 16-25 year olds with

Special Education Needs and Disabilities, to get to a school sixth form, sixth form college or further education learning establishment.

The council spent £3.8m on its Post-16 Travel Scheme in 2022-23, providing travel assistance to 1,320 students across Norfolk. To reflect the current and forecasted level of inflation for the next year, they are considering increasing the parental contribution for the Post-16 Travel Scheme. The council usually increases the cost of the Post-16 Travel Scheme each year in-line with inflation.

In the consultation the council outlines two options for increasing parental contributions for post-16 travel. The 3% option is based on current inflation levels and the 6% option is based on the council's inflationary forecast for 2024-25. The 6% figure more likely represents the cost uplift that the council will face in the coming year.

The council does not have to provide free or subsidised post-16 travel assistance but do have to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement, specifying arrangements for provision of transport or other assistance that the authority considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

The post Post-16 Transport Policy is reviewed annually to make sure it offers the best value for money and meets the needs of local families and young people, while remaining financially sustainable.

Findings from the consultation will be used as part of the evidence to inform a decision about the proposals. If approved, this change will be implemented from September 2024.

The consultation closes on 27 February 2024 and is available [here](#).

Health - HIV testing week awareness - Norfolk campaign launched

Norfolk Museums

Ancient House, Museum of Thetford, has been awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant. The funding will be used to celebrate its centenary and tell the story of its benefactors, the Duleep Singh family.

The NLHF has awarded Ancient House, Museum of Thetford, £198,059, in the museum's centenary year.

Other funding for the two-year project has come from the Thetford Town Council community grant, the Friends of Thetford Museum, Norfolk County Council and Arts Council England as part of the Norfolk Museum Service's National Portfolio Organisation grant.

Public information notices

The Norfolk Coroner's Service are appealing for help to trace families of:

- A man who died at his home address. 58-year-old Philip Cox, who lived at an address in Blofield, Norwich, died on 21st January 2024.
- A woman who died at her home address. 76-year-old Tew Nenkong Clarke, who lived at an address in Dereham Road, Norwich, died on 30th January 2024.

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

Anyone with information relating to Philip Cox or Tew Nenkong Clarke should contact the Coroner's office in Norwich on 01603 774773. coroner.referral@norfolk.gov.uk

Government updates

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The scheme is part of the NHS and government's primary care access recovery plan.

The NHS will launch a national marketing campaign from mid-February 2024, which will encourage the public to access advice and treatment from community pharmacy services for common conditions and run for six weeks. They are developing a communications toolkit for ICBs to use to share information across their channels.

Government to ban disposable vapes

The Government [has announced](#) that disposable vapes are set to be banned as part of plans to tackle the rising number of young people taking up vaping.

The measure comes as part of the government's response to its consultation on smoking and vaping. Recent figures show the number of children using vapes in the past 3 years has tripled. As well as benefitting children's health, the ban will have a positive impact on the environment, as 5 million disposable vapes, that are hard to recycle, are thrown away each year.

As reported to the People and Communities Select committee on 19 January, whilst supporting vaping as a tool to quit smoking, Norfolk County Council is already taking measures to help prevent non-smokers from taking up vaping and to prevent the illegal sale of vapes to children and young people. They have also recently developed a vaping toolkit to help schools implement a whole-school approach to addressing the increasing challenge around vaping.

Riparian rights

Given the extent of the storms we will also have to look at the capacity for retaining water. We had started to do that last year by reminding people of their riparian rights in relation to ditches.

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.



When the temperature dips it can put vulnerable people in your community at risk. Check in on older or vulnerable people living nearby to make sure they're ok.

<https://orlo.uk/lbZmb>

Schools, Every Child in Norfolk to Flourish

Schools are run by either a governing Body or an Academy Trust but there are some areas that are within NCC remit.

NCC must provide sufficient places for ages 4 to 16. We have just revised our School Sufficiency Plan. This is a very difficult task with the urban and rural mix and the key data and demographics. Pupil numbers are also on decline and have been since 2019.

Schools: Parental Choice.

Now parents have a 1,2,3 preference choice but in the last intake some parents did not get any of their 3 choices. It has been agreed for 2025 that parents will be given 4 choices.

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 a voter authority certificate to be issued a ballot paper. The Electoral Commission 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.

Government agrees 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%. Will be an election this year!

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 under-served 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.

Waste centres

Norfolk residents will be able to dispose of small amounts of DIY waste at Norfolk's Recycling Centres free of charge from 31 December following changes made by Norfolk County Council.

The change applies to small-scale projects carried out by householders on their own home, allowing them to bring a maximum 100 litres (must fit into 2 x 50l bags) for free or one single item (maximum size of 200cm x 70cm x 75cm). Each household is allowed four free visits with DIY waste every four weeks. Anything beyond this will still be charged at normal rates.

"From 31 December, the Government has set out the limits to household DIY waste which can be taken free of charge, but our Pay As You Throw service will remain in place as a convenient way to get rid of larger amounts. It's important that people are encouraged to dispose of their waste responsibly.

"In 2022/23 the County Council's Recycling Centres handled more than 60,000 tonnes of waste and 72% of this was diverted from disposal. We hope this change to legislation will be a further boost to householders to recycle as much as they can.

The change in policy follows Government abolishing charges for the disposal of limited amounts and types of DIY waste at recycling centres across the UK.

Prior to 31 December, customers with DIY-type construction and demolition waste will continue to be directed to the 'Pay as you throw service' which is available at all centres.

Traders must continue to pay for DIY waste.

For more information visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/DIYwaste

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1736703165016248352>

Adult learning

Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning has been rated as 'Good' following their latest Ofsted inspection.

The inspection report praised the ambition of the service, which provides community-based and online learning for around 6,000 adults a year. The service achieved a 'Good' rating across all six areas that were inspected, alongside the overall 'Good' rating.

"We are proud of the positive impact that our courses have on the lives and careers of our learners. Adult Learning is an essential tool in upskilling Norfolk's work force and provides a clear boost to our local economy."

"I was pleased to see that the inspectors recognised the high quality of teaching and the inclusive approach that Adult Learning offers. It is important that we support those who face barriers to education, such as mobility, social isolation and financial hardship so they can reach their potential."

Inspectors commented that learners are 'highly motivated' and committed to their studies. They praised the number of people who have a 'clear plan' for their future careers and that they want to improve their economic prospects.

In particular, inspectors highlighted the work with residents of retirement homes who have increased their confidence, self-care and resilience after completing courses in basic cookery. They commented how, following the course, learners felt less isolated and 'excited to prepare and eat their own meals'.

It was also recognised that the service has responded effectively to the growing demand for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.

There was praise for the work with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service apprentices. The inspectors saw how the course helps them to work safely while learning about the importance of health and nutrition. The report concluded that the 'apprenticeship is well matched to the needs of the fire service.'

This inspection result comes on the back of Norfolk County Council Adult Learning being named 'Further or Higher Education Provider of the Year' at this year's Norfolk Education Awards. This followed national recognition in 2021 where the service was named adult and community learning provider of the year at the TES Further Education Awards.

Norfolk County Council Adult Learning offers a wide range of courses for adults of all levels and interests. Whether you want to change your career, improve your skills, or pursue your passion.

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.

Terry Pinto, Group Manager - Prevention Lead at Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, said: "We have a shared goal with the Road Victims Trust of seeing a reduction in the number of fatal and life-changing collisions in Norfolk.

"But we also want to provide the best possible support for those who have been involved in something so serious and heartbreaking. We will be carrying the details of the RVT on our fire engines and response vehicles so we can help people to get the support they need."

Mark Turner, Chief Executive of the Road Victims Trust, said: "I am so pleased we have formed this partnership with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and hope it leads to us working directly with other fire services in the country.

"We offer specialist support to help rebuild victims' lives after serious road traffic collisions and by working with the fire service, we can offer these important services to more people."

Last year, the charity supported 476 people who had been affected by fatal and life-changing road traffic collisions.

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.

Long Stratton bypass

Another key step forward in the Long Stratton bypass project has been achieved with the news today that Octavius Infrastructure Limited has been appointed to build the new route.

Cllr Graham Plant, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, said: "This is another welcome milestone we've reached in this vital infrastructure project. The 3.9km road will not only solve the transport issues caused by the bottleneck on the A140 - which is a major local route - but also open-up improvements for cycling and walking in and around the town. Once in place the scheme will cut congestion, unlock economic growth, and improve journey times across the county."

Cllr Alison Thomas, County Councillor for Long Stratton, said, "This is great news as seeing this project continue to push forward is very welcome - not only for those who live and work in Long Stratton but also for the thousands of people who use the route and experience first-hand the daily delays and frustrations brought by the current situation."

Gavin Pritchard, Managing Director Highways, Octavius Infrastructure Limited, said: "We are delighted to be working with Norfolk County Council on such a key project, bringing significant benefits to the Long Stratton community and the wider transport network. Our carbon reduction measures, the protection and enhancement of the local environment, and the significant sourcing of local suppliers in this region reflects our strong commitment to our sustainability and social value goals for this project."

Following initial preparation works which will be taking place over the coming months, the target date for the main construction work to start on the bypass is Spring 2024. For more information visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/strattonbypass

- [Scam Alert - Fake parcel delivery emails and text messages](#)
- [Scam Alert - Scam callers claiming to be Police Officers](#)
- [Scam Alert - Fake 'Royal Mail' websites selling stamps](#)
- [Rogue Trader Alert - Doorstep cold callers selling household products](#)
- [Information Alert - Bluetongue confirmed in cattle on a premises near Cantley](#)
- [News Alert - Norfolk Police granted closure order on shop selling illegal vapes in Dereham](#)
- [Recall Alert - Tesco is recalling their 'Tesco Finest Apple & Cranberry Stuffing Mix because of the possible presence of moths](#)

- [Safety Alert - River Island is recalling their 'Baby Boys Blue Quilted Snowsuit product number 458872' sold between August 2023 & November 2023 due to a possible choking hazard](#)
- [Information Alert - Citizens Advice Consumer Service Christmas & New Year opening hours and Consumer Alert Emails](#)
- [Scam Alert - Consumer website Which? warns drivers to avoid search engines when downloading parking apps](#)
- [Scam Alert - Automated telephone cold calls claiming to be from Visa](#)
- [Information Alert - Stay safe from Loan Sharks](#)
- [Safety Alert - Gas Hob Elbow Joints Corrective Action Programme continues](#)
- [Recall Alert - Refresco Beverages UK Limited is recalling various Calypso & Asda branded 150ml juice drinks because the straws may be contaminated with metal, making them unsafe](#)
- [Recall Alert - Princes Group is recalling a number of Asda, Branston, Sainsburys and Tesco branded canned bean products because they may contain small rubber balls, making them unsafe to eat](#)
- [Recall Alert - Nomoy Pet Reptile Heat Lamps are being recalled as the dimensions of the plug face are non-compliant meaning they present a serious risk of electric shock](#)
- [Rogue Trader Alert - Doorstep cold callers selling household products](#)
- [Scam Alert - Emails claiming to be from the National Crime Agency](#)
- [Cold Calling Alert - Telephone cold calls regarding loft insulation](#)
- [Rogue Trader Alert - Doorstep cold caller claiming issues with properties' roof](#)
- [Scam Alert - Investment scams and fake cryptocurrency exchanges](#)
- [Cold Calling Alert - Doorstep cold callers in the Downham Market area](#)

More advice and updates

For more advice and updates you can:

- [Visit our Consumer Alerts web page and catch up on previous alerts](#)
- [Find us on Facebook](#)
- [Follow us on Twitter](#)
- [Cold Calling Alert - Telephone cold callers regarding solar panels](#)
- [Cold Calling Alert - Telephone cold calls regarding loft insulation](#)
- [Cold Calling Alert - Doorstep cold callers offering driveway work](#)
- [Rogue Trader Alert - Doorstep cold callers offering to clean gutters](#)
- [Scam Alert - Text messages claiming to be from Royal Mail](#)
- [Recall Alert - Aldi is recalling 'Lacura Cozmo His 100ml' and 'Lacura Cozmo Hers 100ml' Eau de Parfum due to a fault which may cause the glass bottle to break](#)

- [Recall Alert - Daylesford Organic recalls their 'Daylesford Organic Crispbreads and Biscuit Selection' because of the presence of moth larvae](#)
- [Recall Alert - IKEA recalls their 'Asksrorm 40w USB charger dark grey' due to a possible risk of thermal burns and electric shock](#)
- [Scam Alert - 'Page deletion' messages on Facebook](#)
- [Scam Alert - Emails claiming to be from 'TV Licensing'](#)
- [Scam Alert - Text messages claiming to be from HMRC](#)
- [Rogue Trader Alert - Doorstep Cold Callers offering to take waste items](#)
- [Information Alert - Register my Appliance week 2024](#)
- [Scam Alert - Emails claiming to be from Disney+](#)
- [Scam Alert - Unknown charges on bank accounts](#)
- [Cold Calling Alert - Telephone cold calls regarding loft insulation](#)
- [Information Alert - Websites offering CSCS Cards](#)
- [Rogue Trader Alert - Doorstep cold callers claiming issues with properties' roof](#)
- [Recall Alert - TK Maxx recalls 'Cortex Beauty Hair Curler' sold in TK Maxx and Homesense stores and online between September and November 2023 due to a safety issue which may cause an electric shock](#)
- [□ Recall Alert - TK Maxx recalls 'Brookstone Beverage Warmer' sold in TK Maxx and Homesense stores and online between November and December 2023 due to a safety issue which presents a risk of electric shock and fire](#)
- [Scam Alert - Fake DVLA emails](#)
- [Rogue Trader Alert - Doorstep cold calling incidents](#)
- [□ Scam Alert - Investment Scams](#)
- [Scam Alert - Emails claiming to be from Disney+](#)
- [Scam Alert - Unknown charges on bank accounts](#)
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