

County Councillor for Necton and Launditch

Annual Report April 2022- April 2023

Budget and Council Tax:

The Council Tax and budget for 22-23 was set at a meeting of the Council in February 2022. An increase in council tax of 1.99% in the general precept and an increase of 1% for additional adult social care. However, even before the start of the financial year in April 2022 work was begun to tackle the budget for 23-24. There was projected to be a shortfall of some £60m for the year from April 2023 which had to be addressed. A strategic review of the council, “doing things better for less”, was initiated to address the shortfall.

A balanced budget, for 23-24, was set in February which maintained all the council services at the previous level and included a net spending increase of £29.6m to meet rising costs. The government had increased the referendum limit from 2% to 3% for 23-24 so the hard decision was taken to increase the level of council tax to the maximum allowed. This will increase the County Council’s share of band D bills from £1516.95 to £1592.64.

A reminder; local government cash is divided between revenue (broadly what we receive in income) and capital (normally capital grants from government and money borrowed to fund capital projects). Any goods and services and routine maintenance are paid for out of revenue and new projects, major refurbishments, and new equipment are paid for out of capital.

The projected revenue spend for 23-24 is as follows:

- Adult Social Services £249.5m
- Children’s Services £232.6m
- Community and Environmental Services £177.1m
- Strategy and Transformation £12.8m
- Finance and Commercial Services £35.8m

The capital budget for 23-24 is £956.5m. The highlight schemes include the Yarmouth 3rd River Crossing and the building of new SEND schools in places nearer to where pupils live. Other projects include:

- County Farms (refurbishments and carbon reduction) £9.4m
- Technology improvement Programme £8.2m

- Scottow Enterprise Park £8.6m
- Highway Improvements £2.5m
- New Fire and Rescue Equipment £1.2m

County Deal for Norfolk:

The County Council has entered negotiations with government on a “County Deal” for Norfolk and signed an “in-principle” deal in December 2022. The deal would see a grant of £600m paid over 30 years to fund economic development, infrastructure projects and skills training. As a condition of the deal the government require a directly elected leader, in addition to the 84 elected members, to take control of the budget. The governance model proposed requires legislation and this will not be passed until late in 2023 after which the changes required to NCC’s constitution will be debated at a meeting of Council in December 2023.

Bus Service Improvements:

During 2022 the County Council negotiated with government for an allocation from the Bus Service Improvement Fund and received an allocation of £50m, one of the largest in the country. The first £10m phase of this funding was received in November 2022. Since then, NCC have worked closely with bus service operators to implement enhanced routes and services as well as reviewing infrastructure and fares to encourage passenger growth and improve bus service reliability and sustainability. The revised and improved bus timetables will come into use on the 3rd July, 2023.

Social Infrastructure Fund:

The 2022 was the third year that Social Infrastructure funding has provided capital grants to improve facilities for communities and boost the level of community services. £775,000 was awarded to communities to fund individual projects and £225,000 awarded to Norfolk Community Foundation to expand their Nourishing Norfolk food hubs across the county. Look out for this year’s funding to go live.

Major Infrastructure:

Norfolk county Council are working to deliver 2 major road improvement projects; the Long Stratton bypass on the A140 and the much discussed Norwich Western Link (NWL) which will join the A47 to the A1067 effectively

completing an outer ring road to Norwich (The greater Norwich Local Plan envisages 49,000 homes being built during the plan period to 2038). Improvements to the A47 being brought forward by National Highways should also help the economic development of Norfolk by allowing better connectivity and slightly shorter journey times for commuters. The NWL and the A47 improvements should divert traffic currently using the B1145 (through Brisley, Stanfield, Mileham, Litcham, Lexham and Rougham) to use the new improved routes to access Kings Lynn and the east Midlands.

Necton and Launditch Division:

I represent some 8,600+ electors in the Necton and Launditch division which covers approximately 80 square miles and has 22 parishes within its boundaries. 19 parishes have parish councils, there are 2 parish meetings, and one parish is administered by the district councillor. 5 parish councils meet monthly, the rest on a bi-monthly basis (except Rougham), the parish meetings are only obliged to meet once a year.

Your Councillor:

I have, in the past year, been a member of the following committees/working groups at County Hall, all meetings are held during the working day usually commencing at 10:00:

Full Council, the ultimate decision-making body for policy and governance which meets 6 times in a year (plus extra-ordinary meetings).

Scrutiny Committee, which meets every month to scrutinise internal policy and to hear “call ins” of executive decisions from members. Can call in external organisations that serve the residents of Norfolk.

Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel: chairman of this committee which scrutinises the progress of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership in delivering the aims of the Partnership. Reports to the Scrutiny Committee.

Audit and Governance Committee; meets every 3 months or so to monitor the financial performance of the Council, now has responsibility for the members code of conduct.

People and Communities Select Committee; (until July 2022) reviews and formulates policy relating to community matters. Meets every 6 weeks.

Standards Committee as Chairman (until subsumed into the Audit and Governance Committee). Monitored the effectiveness of the Members Code of Conduct.

Adult Social Care Performance Review Panel (meetings held via Teams); monitors the progress of adult social care reforms, working towards an inspection from government.

Planning (Regulatory) Committee; substitute member (must maintain training and be available on each day a meeting is called).

Parish Councils; attended as many of the scheduled 18 meetings as possible, usually bi-monthly. These are always evening meetings as they cannot be convened before 6:00pm.

Mark Kiddle-Morris,
Member for Necton and Launditch Division,
Norfolk County Council.