

Dear Readers

I thought you might be interested in what your county councillor gets up to and whilst I usually find preparing for and attending town and parish councils - plus committee meetings at county hall - is sufficient I said yes to the following events believing them to be both important and useful to our community:

3 February: Attended a Digital Divide Conference which gave me the opportunity to put Norfolk's case to Matthew Hancock MP, Minister of State with responsibility for broadband and mobile 'phone connectivity.

7 February: Chaired Norfolk Flood Summit involving all major organisations engaged in inland and river flooding. (As some of you will know from experience it is often confusing as to who is responsible for what and the hope was to find answers.)

14 February: Town Councillor Pauline Cotton and I joined the Wells branch of the Royal British Legion to talk with the members about Dementia and what is being done to make Wells a dementia friendly community.

16 March: invited to speak at the Local Government Association workshop entitled: 'Connecting the Nation - a Local Government Connectivity Summit' (I believe this will be more of use than it sounds.)

Wighton Parish: An invitation to all residents of Wighton to join me, along with the Programme Director of Better Broadband for Norfolk, and hear all about the coming of fibre broadband to Wighton. Looking forward to seeing you **all** at: 7.00 pm Monday 27 February 2017 in The Village Hall, Buddells Lane, Wighton.

Road & Transport Improvements: Good news that central government is providing Norfolk County Council with an additional £5.1 million to spend on road and transport improvements in the 2017/18 financial year. The money can be used for a wide range of improvements including, I am pleased to say, upgrading and improving the maintenance of local routes.

Norfolk's Vulnerable Syrian Person's Resettlement scheme: The first five Syrian refugee families will arrive in Norwich during February through the Government's Resettlement Scheme. Extensive work has been carried out with district councils, health authorities, schools and voluntary groups to help ensure everything is ready for these families with young children who have spent long periods in the refugee camps.

Norfolk Vanguard - Grid Connection Work: You may well have read recently of the Norfolk Vanguard off-shore windfarm project. Since the company had sent me literature I decided to seek specific information regarding our division and any potential impact of grid connection works. The response advised me that Wells Division is outside of the revised cable search area and when I checked later after the announcement of a new refined area I was told the project is planned even further away from the Wells Division boundary.

Mobile 'Phone 'Boosters': If you receive a weak signal at home you might find a booster useful. If you are interested google Mobile 'Phone Boosters and read

carefully what is promised and check out any queries with the manufacturer. I googled and see Vodafone and '3' offer such equipment - in each case it looks as though it works only for calls with people using the same provider. Another company claim to handle E/Vodafone/O/3. Some people find the equipment very useful, some are disappointed – it depends on a number of factors so check very carefully before you pay.

Dance and music activities for older people: The first session went well although having joined in I realised sitting in meetings does not increase one's flexibility. If you missed the 14th February session you will be made welcome on Tuesday 28 February - 12.30-2:30pm at Wells Community Hospital. The events aim to engage participants in a programme of fun, stimulating music and dance activities in a safe and welcoming environment. For further information contact Lea Schiller at Creative Arts East on 01953 713390 or email lea@creativeartseast.co.uk.

Broadband: This is just a short note regarding complaints made that Openreach excludes other Internet Service Providers (ISPs) from offering fibre broadband for several weeks after BT has had the opportunity. I have been informed that Ofcom regulates Openreach tightly on this matter. When a fibre cabinet becomes available the commissioning process means Openreach release the cabinet to all ISPs including BT ISPs at the same time. Other ISPs would definitely raise a complaint with Ofcom if it believed BT were not treating all ISPs in the same way. What differs is that different ISP internal processes appear to take different amounts of time to start offering services once a cabinet is live.

Road Gritting: When freezing temperatures are predicted Norfolk County Council officers are on duty ensuring the gritting teams go out on time, and repeatedly if required. The County Council currently has around 13,000 tonnes of salt stocked in the county and is replenished throughout the winter. More than a third of Norfolk's roads totalling over 2,000 miles are on the council's 49 regular gritting routes, including all A and B-class roads and some C-class roads, and each route takes around three hours for a gritter lorry to treat. The A11, A47 and A12 are gritted by Highways England. You can check which roads are on the council's gritting routes by looking at the map at www.norfolk.gov.uk/gritting. On the same map you can find the locations of the more than 1,800 grit bins in the county that are filled by the County Council and which people can use on public pavements, cycle paths and roads. Now whilst over 2,000 miles are on the 49 gritting routes I realise there will be readers whose road is not gritted. Not that it is of any comfort but my road is not gritted and I do appreciate the concerns. Here is where your town or parish council comes into play. You can talk to your council and ask if the road you have in mind could be put forward to NCC with a request to have it included on the gritting route. This may not be successful and an alternative is to discuss the possibility of having a grit bin in the vicinity of the road.

Wishing you a lovely and flood free Spring Marie Strong