

April Priory Parish Council Report

Please find attached my report for the above period.

As always if you believe I can be of help or assistance as your District Councillor please do get in touch.

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Sarah

District Council General

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

Parish Cllrs will be aware that the District Council was obliged to prepare and submit a response to the Governments proposals for Devolution and Reorganisation by the 21st March. (Briefing events were held with all Parish Councils invited during February). Following a great deal of discussion amongst the various Councils across Norfolk and evaluation of the data provided by the Consultants – Cllrs voted in favor of providing the following response.

- 1. Council expresses its view that it disagrees with the Government's proposals to introduce a unitary local government structure in Norfolk; as it is not convinced that such an arrangement will best meet the needs of the district's rural communities and residents or deliver the savings and efficiencies anticipated.**
- 2. Accepting, however, that this is the position of Government as detailed in the English Devolution White Paper, the Council strongly objects to proposals being suggested for a single unitary authority covering the whole of Norfolk in that it will be of a very large scale in terms of area and population served, will not be able to reflect the distinct communities of place and interest which exist across the county, and not meet the definition of "local" government in understanding local places or in providing services tailored to meet local needs.**
- 3. The Council therefore strongly supports proposals for a three unitary council model for Norfolk in the future as the basis of the**

interim plan to be submitted to Government. The Council believes that such an arrangement would best meet the six key criteria laid out by Government and would see one authority based on the urban area of Norwich; an authority covering the West of the county with a strong agricultural and agri-tech economy and an East authority with a key focus on clean energy and tourism.

- 4. Council therefore agrees that its response to Government regarding local government reorganisation in Norfolk to be submitted by 21st March 2025 makes reference to an Interim Plan proposing three unitary councils in Norfolk as detailed at Appendix 3 with the submission of the response to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.**

As some of you are aware I am not personally in favor of the restructure however I do understand that trying to stop the tide will not be constructive in the bigger picture. We as your representatives need to respond constructively to the Government's proposals to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk through providing responses which seek to promote and protect the interests of North Norfolk's residents, communities and businesses, and that is what I will work with others to do.

Refuse and Waste Collection

An extraordinary meeting of Full Council was also held at the end of April. Arguably the most important item on the agenda were the changes to waste services that central government requires all council to implement by March 2026, this being the introduction of weekly food waste collection. Although some funding has been forthcoming from central government, according to current estimates it falls short of the amount that will be required to fully implement the largest changes to waste collection in the last 25 years. We will need to acquire new vehicles for the waste collection and provide all homes and businesses with appropriate waste caddies for collection. The meeting was required to vote on providing the additional funding from our own reserves to cover any of the estimated shortfall. As you may imagine we have made representations to central government requesting further funding.

An internal food waste caddy (approx. 5 litres) will need to be provided to householders for use in the kitchen. This provides the householder with somewhere to store food waste in the short term and helps improve collection yields. Householders will empty their food waste into an external food waste caddy of approximately 23 litres (approximately 10% of the size of a wheelie bin) which can be placed either on top of or beside their existing bins. Residents in flats etc. where larger communal bins are provided will have larger external bins to empty their food waste into.

The Council's contractor Serco will then empty the material from these external caddies or communal bins into a specific food waste collection vehicle. These vehicles are smaller than a normal refuse collection vehicle (RCV) and weight around 7.5tonnes, they have a leakproof body which is essential for the collection of food waste, to the high-water content of the waste.

As and when further information and operational details are available I will of course update you.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) was introduced as part of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper and the Future Farming Programme. It provided funding for capital projects aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as community infrastructure initiatives. The primary objectives of the fund were to enhance productivity, bolster the rural economy and strengthen rural communities. Additionally, it supported projects designed to address the unique challenges faced by rural areas.

The total capital-only allocation for North Norfolk during 2023 /24 and 2024/25 was £1,457,852. It was not known until very recently that a further REPF scheme would operate but the Council has now been informed that it has been allocated £437,259 capital funding for a 'transitional year' for a 2025-26 programme. I will ensure you are updated on how this money will be allocated to projects as soon as possible, which should not be too long as the funding has to be spent by next year.

Pavement Licences

In line with many other Councils across the UK and in accordance with the Government's permanent pavement licensing regime under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, we have now introduced a more formal pavement licence process and fees scale. With the proliferation

of tables and chairs on the public pavements outside the growing number of cafes, it is clear that controls need to be in place to ensure safe passage of pedestrians. Risks of continuing without adoption of the new powers conferred on local authorities: - Unlicensed pavement furniture on the highway, posing risks to highway users including disabled pedestrians and highway users. - Increased litter outside premises - Antisocial behaviour outside premises.

Whilst the Council clearly wishes to promote trading by all businesses in North Norfolk it cannot be to the detriment of others. Public consultation is a pre-requisite for all applications. NNDC consults with the police licensing team on all permanent pavement licensing applications. All concerns raised about community safety would be considered when deciding whether to grant a licence. Any negative impact on the local community brought about as a direct or indirect result of the pavement licence would be grounds for revocation of the licence.

Local Authority Housing Fund

North Norfolk District Council has been successful in bidding for Round 3 funding through the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). At its March meeting Cabinet received and accepted a report that sets out proposals to use the £588,000 of LAHF grant to help purchase a further six units of Temporary Accommodation for homeless households.

Cromer Pier

As Councillors will be aware Cromer Pier is a major tourist attraction for visitors to North Norfolk and its reputation for entertainment and historic value a source of pride to local residents, Pier of the Year winner and Grade 2 listed building.

However, as you will also have heard in various previous reports the Pier is extremely expensive to maintain, not least because it projects into the North Sea which causes constant corrosion of the wooden and metal structure.

This summer we will be trialling two voluntary donation points on the Pier in an effort to try and recover some of the costs of upkeep from visitors enjoying the facility.

Local Plan

The Local Plan Inspector returned to the Council recently and completed his hearings under regulation 24 of the Town and County Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

We await his report, but are pleased we were able to provide responses to all the points he had raised in his initial findings.