

Barry Stone - County Councillor for the Loddon Division

Annual Parish Report - 2017

A Year of Achievement – 2016/17



The last year has been a year of achievement for Norfolk County Council.

While a great number of changes have taken place, the culture of the council has been driven in a much more responsive, flexible direction. While there is much still to do, our reputation has improved significantly. We have received recognition as a listening council, a caring council, a courageous council and one that is looking forward to a more positive future.

We have not ducked the extremely difficult decisions that have been needed, including in Children's Services, where we are determined to deliver that step-change needed to bring about the required improvements to see the service out of special measures and restored to full council control.

All achievements over the last year must be seen against a backdrop of ever-shrinking budgets and growing demand for a number of our services.

At a service level, achievements have been seen across our service areas.

Children's Services

More children than ever are being educated in good or outstanding schools - big improvements in Norfolk schools were highlighted in the Ofsted Annual Report in December 2016, with Norfolk the fifth most improved county nationally for the proportion of pupils at good or outstanding secondary schools over the past four years, and the 18th most improved for primary schools. Norfolk is also one of the most improved in the region for children at the end of the early years' stage achieving a 'good level of development'. And Norfolk's colleges and sixth form colleges are all rated 'good' by Ofsted.

Norfolk moves into top-half of the GCSE league table - Provisional GCSE results for 2016 have put Norfolk above the national average for the first time in a decade. The government has introduced a new method for measuring performance, called Progress 8, which ranks schools according to the progress made by students during their time in secondary education. Under this system, Norfolk had a score of 0.02, compared with a national average of -0.03, where the higher the number, the greater the progress.

A unique partnership - Norfolk County Council and children's charity, Barnardo's, are developing an imaginative new approach to working together to better support children and their families. The new service, which we anticipate having in place by summer 2017, will focus on edge of care provision; supporting more children to remain at home with their families (where it is safe to do so), as opposed to coming into the care system.

Children's University - raising children's aspirations by supporting them to carry on learning outside the normal school day and encourage a passion for learning is what our Children's University is all about. Norfolk Children's University is run by Educator Solutions - a traded Norfolk County Council service – and is working with over 12,000 children in Norfolk. In February 2017, another 80 five- to 12-year-olds

graduated from the university, marking the completion of more than 30 hours each of extra learning outside school.

Getting more of Norfolk's young people into top universities - the Norfolk Higher Education Scheme has gone from strength to strength this year. It was founded to link up sixth forms and colleges in Norfolk to share opportunities for university applicants - such as mock interviews, workshops, outside speakers and university visits. All 33 schools and colleges in the county have signed up to the scheme, which is run by a partnership of Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Education Leaders. Its pilot year, which was open only to applicants to the 'most-competitive' and 'high-demand' universities, saw 350 students sign up. This year, having opened up to all Norfolk students applying to any university, 1,220 have already registered. In summer 2016, 48 Norfolk state school students were offered places at Oxford or Cambridge University. Increasing numbers of care leavers are moving into higher education; over 50 of our care leavers (11%) are doing university courses, compared to a national average of 6%.

Transforming school buildings - we're also supporting children's learning by investing in school buildings. In February 2017, for example, we completed £1.99m of improvements to Southtown Primary School. This two-phase project, designed and managed by NPS, has transformed the school into a modern all-through primary for four- to 11-year-olds – which is better for their learning – and increased the number of places from 180 to 210. This is part of our £144m programme of improvements.

NEET and unknowns - Norfolk has done exceptionally well in the first year of a new measure for local authorities, which combines numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and the number of young people whose activity is unknown. This gives a much more accurate picture of young people's circumstances. In Norfolk, we have a combined NEET and unknown percentage of 4.9%, much better than the national figure of 6.8%.

Growing our own social workers – recruiting and retaining social workers is a challenge for many councils. In Norfolk, we are doing something about it – by growing a bank of talented social workers and developing them through their entire career. In summer 2016, we launched our own social care academy which offers training and mentoring to social workers, not only new to the profession, but at all stages of their career. The academy builds on the work of the highly successful Norfolk Institute for Practice Excellence (NIPE) scheme, an innovative partnership between us and University of East Anglia, set up in recognition that the first year of a social worker's career is crucial. 110 social workers have been employed through NIPE since it was set up two years ago.

Adult's Services

In Good Company - Loneliness can cause ill health and reduce people's ability to lead fulfilling and independent lives. In November 2016 we launched our IGC campaign – working with partners, including charities and the local media - to combat loneliness and raise awareness of the wide range of support on offer in Norfolk. Since the campaign launched, we've received hundreds of pledges from individuals and organisations – all of them promising to do something, no matter how small, to help tackle loneliness in their community. Now Norfolk businesses and community organisations are being urged to apply for a new quality accreditation mark for their work to combat loneliness in the county.

Our adult social care twitter day - County Council staff and partners took to Twitter in October 2016 to raise awareness of adult social care services countywide. They tweeted experiences of their typical day, giving followers an insight into how diverse the care sector is, and also shared a wealth of information

about what's available. More than 14,000 people looked at the tweets on the day and the site is now being followed by the media and social work organisations. This was our fourth successful Twitter day, following Children's Services social care, schools and roads earlier in the year.

Healthy Home Assistance – we've been working with Great Yarmouth Borough Council, East Coast Community Healthcare and NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group on the 'Healthy Homes Assistance' project, set up at the end of 2016. The project is helping facilitate early hospital discharge, reduce admissions and / or readmissions and provide preventative measures to reduce risks around the home. A study of one of the cases already completed by the project where falls prevention works were carried out at a cost of £465, has identified potential savings to the NHS of £12,000.

Giving a warm welcome to Syrian refugee families - Norfolk has a long tradition of extending the hand of friendship to those in need and this has held true in this case of welcoming Syrian refugees to the county. At the beginning of February, the first five Syrian families arrived in Norwich to begin their new life in Norfolk. In preparation, extensive work was done with district councils, health authorities, schools and voluntary groups to get everything in place to welcome the families, all of whom have young children. We were also inundated with offers of help and support from Norfolk residents and local faith and voluntary groups.

Acting against domestic violence – in December 2016, we reached the 500 mark for training domestic abuse 'champions' in frontline professions to help people suffering abuse. Our domestic abuse change coordinators are working across the county with people in professions who come face-to-face with the public, training them to become 'champions' so that they can look out for signs of abuse and take action to improve the safety of anyone affected. Champions are given free training to learn how to ask, respond to, and support people affected by domestic abuse, and to use their knowledge to also help their colleagues know how best to respond.

Norfolk Community Learning Services celebrates 'Good' Ofsted report in major turnaround - Education in Norfolk has received another boost with the news that Norfolk Community Learning Services (NCLS) has achieved an Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Good', providing Norfolk County Council with the security and sustainability to achieve its long term objectives for the service. This follows a previous judgement of 'Inadequate' in January 2015. At the recent inspection (April 2016), Ofsted inspectors said that "Leaders and managers have dealt quickly and very effectively with key issues identified at the previous inspection".

Inspectors were impressed by the new vision, strategic objectives and operating model for the service, formerly known as Adult Education. These were approved by Norfolk County Council's Communities Committee and implementation will be complete by September 2016.

Community and Environmental Services

Better broadband - the latest tranche of Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) will see high-speed broadband coverage reaching more than 95% of Norfolk home and businesses by spring 2020. This brings the total investment in the BBfN programme to £68m since it launched at the end of 2012. Currently, 87% of households and businesses in Norfolk can get a superfast broadband service, more than double the number four years ago (42%). We won't be satisfied until everyone in Norfolk has

access, so we will continue to push for more investment and make the money we already have go as far as possible.

Integrated transport strategy – along with Suffolk County Council and the New Anglia LEP, we have commissioned Mouchel to research and produce an integrated transport strategy, covering air, road, rail, buses, sustainable transport and ports, which will be used to lever in transport investment from Government. The work was commissioned in October 2016 and is due to be published shortly.

Good progress on the NDR - it was a productive first year for the construction of the Norwich Northern Distributor Road which will provide Norfolk, Broadland and Norwich with high-quality infrastructure that will serve the county, its people and the economy for years to come. Work is going well, with most of the 1.5 cubic metres of bulk excavation complete, three roundabouts in use at the western end, bridge beams installed or imminent on four of the eight bridges and nearly 9km of carriageway complete to base asphalt layers. A new Tarmac plant at Postwick will this year supply nearly 150,000 tonnes of asphalt for the 20km dual carriageway. Planting of the 300,000 shrubs, trees and hedgerow plants is well under way.

Our transport infrastructure priorities

A47 - Norfolk County Council leads the A47 Alliance, bringing together key stakeholders from Lowestoft to Peterborough to lobby for improvements to this trunk road. Throughout 2016 we have been lobbying Highways England for early delivery of three sections of dualling, as well as junction improvements in Guyhirn, Thickthorn and Great Yarmouth. These schemes are programmed to begin in 2020. The Alliance Steering Group is currently gearing up to influence the trunk road

programme for the next round of improvements due to be delivered between 2020 and 2025. We have already met Highways England to lobby for our two priorities in Norfolk in this period: the dualling of the Acle Straight and Tilney to East Winch.

Towards the Norwich Western Link - now that the NDR is under construction, we have begun to consider the business case for a Norwich Western Link. This would both ease local traffic conditions and provide a strategic link to the west of the city. Initial work has focused on gathering feedback from local communities and developing a stakeholder group. We are also beginning to assess the economic viability of the project, and if the business case proves positive, we will press for

funding and scheme delivery.

Long Stratton bypass - a bypass for Long Stratton would benefit residents and road users alike, and is firmly on our list of priorities. Along with improvements to the Hempnall crossroads, it's also required for the village's planned growth of 1,800

new houses and 12 hectares of employment land. We are keen to lead on the design and delivery of the bypass, and work is currently ongoing to set out how we, South Norfolk Council and the developer will collaborate to support the process

of approvals, design, funding and delivery. Once the process is agreed, preparatory work will start towards the planning application – with a view to submitting it by the end of this year and delivery around 2020.

Podium position in highways and transport survey - an independent survey of Norfolk residents resulted in the County Council being ranked third out of 28 similar councils for satisfaction with

highways and transport services – the third year in a row that Norfolk was in the top three. One of the biggest increases in satisfaction was for street lighting which saw us move up from 18th to 9th position in the rankings.

Emergency Services collaboration - Medical co-responding trial

Since July Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has been participating in a national medical co-responding trial which sees our fire-fighters mobilised to suspected cardiac arrests alongside the East of England Ambulance Service. We have 10 fire stations with 99 firefighters participating in the trial, the greatest number in the region.

By mobilising our firefighters with the ambulance service we are can deliver an early intervention using cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillators giving the casualty the best chance of survival.

Since July we have attended over 230 co-responding incidents and initial analysis would indicate that our crews are delivering effective CPR. The national trial concludes in February 2017.

Awards - The Library and Information Service won the national Libraries Change Lives Award for its pioneering work in partnership with Norfolk Public Health to promote healthier lifestyles. This work is being taken up as an example of good practice by libraries across the UK. Enhancing the reputation of NLIS

Customers - Each year Libraries run the Summer Reading Challenge to encourage children to continue reading during the summer holidays and to make a significant contribution to improving literacy. In Summer 2016, 14,413 children and young people took part in the challenge. 57% were girls and 43% were boys.

Libraries as cultural hubs - In 2016, the potential of libraries as cultural hubs started to be realised. A number of theatrical and music performances were held in libraries across the county. The most recent being Librarian Theatre's 'A Christmas Carol' which played to sell out audiences in three libraries before Christmas. Earlier in the Autumn 5 libraries played host to an interactive dance performance aimed at early years.