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November 2016



"November 21st"

The extraordinary meeting called to make the final County Council decision concerning Devolution has been cancelled following the decision of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk District council to reject Devolution proposals. There are "No" other deals on the table despite Henry Bellingham suggesting there are. This is a huge loss to Norfolk as far as pump priming housing and infrastructure are concerned

An additional meeting of Full Council took place on 7 November:

This updated county councillors on progress on the devolution deal. Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, recently met with Council and business leaders in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Mr Javid said: "It is a very generous deal, in fact I think it is one of the most generous deals in the country. I am keen that we devolve significant powers and resources away from Whitehall to the people of Norfolk and Suffolk. I don't want the region to miss out on this historic deal which would make a real positive difference to the lives of local residents."

Buses:

I have received numerous complaints about the revised bus services particularly into the Poringland hub where users need to change buses. School transport has also come under scrutiny particularly along the Waveney Valley

I have passed all the concerns onto the relevant officer and as you are no doubt aware the contact for the service buses is Daniel Yellop at: daniel.yellop@Norfolk.gov.uk

Councillors to consider ash dieback disease:

Members will consider measures which will allow the county council to effectively manage the implications of Chalara which is already affecting trees in Norfolk. These measures

could include seeking financial support from Defra, and looking at how the county council can work with landowners to minimise costs to the authority Norfolk was one of the first areas in the country where Chalara was identified and councillors will hear how Norfolk is leading the way nationally in work to tackle the problem.

Details of our methodology and early survey results were well received at the national Ash Dieback Safety Intervention Meeting organised by Defra, and national body the Tree Council, are now keen to share our methodology with other authorities in the country. The County Council has a responsibility to maintain the public highway and require owners of private trees to make safe dangerous trees in the interests of public safety. The current three year plan of work, will allow the county council to identify and assess the condition of ash trees adjacent to the County's 6000 miles of roads and footpaths.

Giving Tree appeal:

Giving Tree brings festive joy to children in care

In the lead up to Christmas, visitors to a Norwich bookstore are being invited to get in the festive spirit by giving the gift of a book to a child in care.

NCC and Waterstones have teamed up for the eleventh successive year to launch the Giving Tree appeal, a Christmas project aimed at bringing joy to the county's looked-after children.

The tree, which is up in the Castle Street store, is decorated with dozens of tags, each representing a child and the book they would like to receive this Christmas. Requests from children in the county ranged from a specific book or author to a certain type or genre.

Customers wishing to support the appeal, can buy the books, which are collected by the County Council and wrapped for children in time for Christmas. Last year the response was overwhelming with council staff wrapping and delivering over 300 books.

The tree is in store now and books need to be bought by Sunday 4 December, in order to reach children in time for Christmas. Any books bought after that date will be delivered in the New Year.

Lifestyle Issues

Obesity has been in the national and local news today after an article was published in the Lancet Journal about how people welcome referrals to weight management programmes by their GPs. The article refers to a study which also found that GPs who raise the issue of their patients' obesity will not offend them and are likely to help them reach a healthy weight.

Obesity increases the risk of a number of health problems especially type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

In Norfolk, 216,000 adults are obese and by 2020 we estimate that this number will reach 245,000 - with thousands of more people having coronary heart disease, strokes, hypertension and diabetes.

For this reason obesity is a priority for our local Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), and we recently announced a weight management partnership with Slimming World - offering a 12 week course to around 2,600 people who need to lose weight. If someone has a NHS Health Check and are found to be obese (with a BMI >30), then a doctor can refer them to Slimming World who will help them find a suitable course or group to attend in their local area.

Wind Energy

Communities in Norfolk are currently being consulted about the proposed route of onshore powerlines required for the proposed offshore wind farm "Hornsea Project Three" being constructed by Danish Energy company DONG Energy 150km off the North Norfolk Coast. The National Grid connection will be at Norwich Main substation near Mangreen (Stoke Holy Cross)

Extra Parking in Norwich

A further 226 car parking spaces are to be constructed at the front of County Hall to provide additional parking for employees, visitors and the public. The current car park is at capacity, soon to be made more congested by staff moving to County Hall. The new pay and display car park should be ready by Summer 2017.

Government ditches plans to force schools to become academies

The government has announced that it will not be continuing with its plans to force all schools to become academies.

Justine Greening, the Education Secretary, made the announcement as part of a ministerial statement this week.

In unveiling a new Technical and Further Education Bill, she mentioned that the controversial 'Education for All' Bill would no longer be pursued. The government, instead, will be encouraging schools to convert to academies if they wish to do so.

"Our ambition remains that all schools should benefit from the freedom and autonomy that academy status brings. Our focus, however, is on building capacity in the system and encouraging schools to convert voluntarily," she said.

Citizens Advice and Pensionwise

Citizens Advice is the new name for the old Citizens Advice Bureau. In addition they now have a Pensionwise service which gives free advice on pension problems. Anyone requiring help can phone the Norwich office 01603 660857 or 03444 111444