

## **NCC Update 31/10/24**

### **Norfolk Economic Strategy**

Ambitious plans for Norfolk's economy have been unveiled in a new strategy to be presented to the county council's cabinet in November.

Norfolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, sets out an overview of the local economy and key priority areas for economic growth.

The strategy seeks to build on Norfolk's influence in key sectors, including clean energy, agri-tech and cutting-edge research.

Further information about the strategy and a link to the Cabinet papers is available [here](#).

### **New Roads Programme - Support for Children and Young People**

More young people in Norfolk are being supported to stay at home with their families or return home, thanks to the specialist support being provided by Norfolk County Council.

The [council's New Roads programme](#), which provides wrap around support for children at risk of coming into care, or those already in care, has prevented 395 children coming into long-term care since it was launched four years ago. This has avoided costs of £35m and substantially improved outcomes for young people who have often faced significant challenges.

The council is now extending the approach to work with children with disabilities and their families.

The success is one of several outlined in the annual review of children's residential care, which is being discussed by the council's Cabinet on 4 November.

Further information and a link to the Cabinet papers is available [here](#).

### **Stop at 14: Campaign to encourage people to think about their drinking habits**

The second phase of the Stop at 14 campaign, originally launched in February 2024, will take place from 1-30 November, ahead of the festive season.

The campaign encourages people to reflect on their drinking habits and to understand what a unit of alcohol looks like, so that they can make healthier and safer choices.

Health professionals recommend a **limit of 14 units of alcohol per week**. In Norfolk, although there's an overall decrease in the average amount people drink, men over 40 remain more likely to drink above this limit and are a target audience for this campaign.

The campaign aims:

- To encourage men to think about how much alcohol they consume in a week and consider making changes.
- To raise awareness of the recommended maximum consumption to protect health, which is 14 units of alcohol per week
- To help men recognise and understand what a unit of alcohol represents: a single pint of lower strength (ABV 3.6%) beer is 2 units; a medium glass of wine (175ml) is 2.1 units .
- To promote [Drinkcoach](#), a new free online service to help Norfolk residents get help with their drinking behaviours.
- To highlight the health benefits of drinking less alcohol: improved physical and mental health, weight loss, better sleep, more energy, no more hangovers, save money.

## Members can support the campaign by:

- Visiting [www.readytochange.co.uk](http://www.readytochange.co.uk) and find out more about the drinking support that's available.
- Sharing any social media posts on your own Facebook or Twitter platforms.
- Signposting any residents in your community who might be interested to find out more and access the free coaching by visiting [www.norfolk.gov.uk/readytochange](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/readytochange) and to <https://drinkcoach.org.uk/>.

## Seasonal Vaccines

The Norfolk and Waveney Integrated System have reported that NHS staff in the East of England have already delivered more than 2 million seasonal vaccinations as the NHS ramps up its efforts to avoid a 'triple-demic' of flu, COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) this winter.

They say that latest NHS seasonal vaccination data shows over 1.9 million COVID-19 or flu vaccines have been given in the region (680,610 COVID-19 and 1,251,557 flu vaccinations administered as of 20 October), along with 96,498 RSV jabs, as those eligible come forward to get protection.

Anyone eligible can book a COVID-19 or flu vaccine appointment via the [NHS website](#), NHS App, or by calling 119 for free. The flu vaccine can also be booked by searching online for a local pharmacy and there are [walk in sites available](#) to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

## **National updates –Autumn Budget 2024**

Outlined below are a number of policy announcements from the Autumn Budget that have implications for local government.

Full details and their implications for Norfolk County Council are not yet known.

A full transcript of the Autumn Budget and associated papers can be [found here](#).

## **Local Government Funding**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP announced a “significant, real-terms funding increase” for the local government sector, including £1.3bn in additional grant funding to deliver essential services, with £600m earmarked for social care.

Additionally the Government:

- Confirmed that there are plans to reform local authority funding in 2026-27. Further details may be announced in the provisional settlement.
- Says it will simplify the wider local funding landscape, reducing the number of grants and consolidating them into the Local Government Finance Settlement, as well as moving towards a multi-year settlement for local government so local authorities can plan more effectively.
- Confirmed that The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will continue at a reduced level for a further year with £900 million of funding; this transitional arrangement will provide as much stability as possible in advance of wider local growth funding reforms.
- Announced that Local Authorities will receive additional income from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging scheme, starting in January 2025. Authorities will receive an estimated £1.1bn in new funding from this income stream but It is not yet clear how this income will be allocated in two-tier areas, or the extent to which it may have to be used to fund additional costs.

## **Business Rate Reform**

The government have published a [discussion paper on business rates reform](#). The objectives are to protect the high street, encourage investment and create a fairer system. As a first step the Chancellor announced the Government's intention to permanently lower business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure properties from 2026-2027. Business rates are an important source of revenue for local government and the impact on the local government funding system will be an important consideration in reviewing the tax.

## **Increase to National Minimum Wage and Employers National Insurance**

The Chancellor confirmed an increase of 6.7% to the National Minimum Wage and a rise of 1.2% to Employers National Insurance Contributions. The Government has not currently funded the revenue implications of these for local authorities' budgets.

## **Devolution**

The Government said that the upcoming English Devolution White Paper will set out more detail on the government's devolution plans 'including on working with councils to move to simpler structures that make sense for their local areas, with efficiency savings from council reorganisation helping to meet the needs of local people.' The white paper will set out their plans to "widen devolution to more areas and deepen the powers of existing mayors and their combined authorities, ensuring they have the tools needed to boost economic growth".

## **Social Care**

The Chancellor has earmarked £600 million of new grant funding for social care as part of their real terms increase to core local government spending power.

Additionally the Government:

- Announced that Carer's Allowance weekly earnings limit will be increased from £151 a week to the equivalent of 16 hours at the National Living Wage to help unpaid carers, meaning a carer can earn over £10,000 a year while receiving the allowance. This is aimed at allowing unpaid carers to increase the amount of hours they work.
- Announced a £86 million increase to the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- Announced that as part of NHS capital settlement, £26 million capital funding will be provided to open new mental health crisis centres.

## **Children's Services**

The chancellor announced spending commitments on early years and family services in 2025/26 including:

- an additional £1.8 billion to continue the expansion of government-funded childcare.
- £30 million in the rollout of free breakfast clubs in schools next year.
- £69 million to continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs.

Over £250 million will be provided in 2025-26 to continue to test innovative measures to support children and reduce costs for local authorities. This includes £44 million of new funding to pilot a Kinship Allowance as well as to create hundreds of new foster placements.

The government says it will set out plans for fundamental reform of the children's social care system in Phase 2 (the Spending Review). These will include promoting early intervention to help children to stay with their families where possible and fixing the broken care market.

## **SEND & Education**

The Chancellor earmarked a £1bn uplift in funding (equivalent to 6% real growth) for SEND reform and improving outcomes, and to ensure that the overall system is financially sustainable. Further plans of the government's vision to reform England's SEND provision will be set out in Phase 2 (the Spending Review).

Additionally the Government:

- Committed £1.4 billion to ensure the delivery of the existing School Rebuilding Programme, with 50 rebuilds a year to tackle crumbling school buildings. The funding will also be used for several other capital investments including to begin delivery of new or expanded nurseries through upgrading space in primary schools, to improve the condition of the school estate, and to renovate and expand the children's home estate.
- Announced that the Core schools budget grant will increase by an additional £2.3 billion next year, which the government says is an increase per pupil funding in real terms.

## **Extension of Household Support Fund**

The Autumn Budget has earmarked £1bn for the next calendar year to extend the Household Support Fund to local authorities. Norfolk's share of this funding is administered by the County Council. [The Household Support Fund \(HSF\)](#) was initiated during the Covid-19 pandemic and goes towards a range of support for individuals including helping some households with the cost of essentials.

## **Connectivity**

The Chancellor has earmarked £500m to improve access to reliable and faster speed mobile connectivity, including rural areas. The funding will be used to deliver Project Gigabit and the Shared Rural Network - to drive the rollout of digital infrastructure.

## **Transport and roads**

The Chancellor set out a number of commitments including:

- The Chancellor has confirmed a £500 million increase in road maintenance funding from April 2025 to maintain and renew local roads (including repair of pot holes). The Government says this is nearly a 50% increase in funding, with almost £1.6bn now allocated to maintain and renew the nation's roads.
- There will be an additional £100 million investment in cycling and walking infrastructure in 2025-26, to support Local Authorities to install cycling infrastructure and upgrade pavements and paths.
- The Chancellor confirmed the extension of the bus fare cap running from January 2025 to December 2025 at the higher rate of £3.

## **Energy and Net Zero:**

The Chancellor set out a number of commitments including:

- £1bn of funding over three years for the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme to decarbonise the public estate.
- Taking the first step towards a Warm Homes Programme, with an initial £3.4bn towards heat decarbonisation and household energy efficiency over the next three years. This includes £1.8 billion to support fuel poverty schemes, helping over 225,000 households reduce their energy bills by over £200.

- £163m to continue the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund over 2025-26 to 2027-28 helping businesses to decarbonise.
- Investing over £200 million in 2025-26 to accelerate EV chargepoint rollout, including funding to support local authorities to install on-street chargepoints across England. Providing £120 million in 2025-26 to support the purchase of new electric vans via the plug-in vehicle grant and to support the manufacture of wheelchair accessible EVs.

### **Planning, Housing and Infrastructure**

The Chancellor set out a number of commitments including:

- £500m boost to the Affordable Homes Programme
- Reduction of Right to Buy discounts and enabling councils to keep 100% of receipts, allowing homes to be replaced.
- £233m additional spending in 2025-26 on homelessness taking total spend to £1bn
- Funding for an additional 300 planners and to boost and upskill local planning authorities' capacity to deliver the government's wider planning reform agenda.
- Confirmation that the Planning & Infrastructure Bill will be launched early next year.