

Councillor report, August 2023, from Catherine Rowett

September 7th 2023

August was a quiet time at the County Council, with no routine committee or Council meetings, but things have now started up again in September.

Norwich to Tilbury Pylons: I was invited to add some additional input to the response that the council had already prepared to submit to the consultation by National Grid. I was largely in agreement with the overall content of the response, with its preference for an offshore alternative (with a proper distribution system for all future offshore wind on the East Coast) instead of the proposed onshore route, and a preference for underground over the overhead cables that have been proposed. The finished response, including my input in appendix 2, can now be found in the public domain, since it formed the business of a meeting of the Planning and Highways Delegations Committee on Friday 8th September 2023 at 10 a.m. Residents and Parish Councillors might wish to watch the video of this meeting, which can be accessed on the Norfolk County Council Youtube feed. Details of the meeting and papers can be found here: [CMIS > Calendar of Meetings](#)

Highways and road safety: in early August I went to the Highways depot in Hethersett for a briefing on options in relation to improvements we can make to highways, cycle paths, pavements etc. Options for funding schemes include the Parish Partnership scheme, with up to £25,000 contributed by NCC providing the Parish Council finds the funding to contribute half the costs. This scheme is for works that don't involve changes to any legal traffic order. But we also currently have access to the Road Safety Community Fund which is currently open to applications from this part of Norfolk, and does allow us to apply to change Traffic Regulation Orders if our proposal meets the relevant criteria. Any schemes hoping to access this fund need to be prepared during September if possible.

Long Stratton Bypass: I have been given a place on the Working Group and attended a meeting on 17th August. There are still a number of hurdles to pass before the road gets approved. I would be interested to hear the views of West Depwade residents and parish councils.

Committee work

I have been given a place on the Infrastructure and Development Committee. The next meeting is on the morning of Wednesday 13th September, and business includes (among other things) the first tranche of Norfolk County Council's Climate Action Plan, and the new Walking, wheeling and cycling strategy (which is good in general, but fails completely to address the issue of speed limits and other measures to make walking and cycling safe in the country lanes). I will also get to attend as a substitute on other committees where we have a Green councillor, if the business includes something that particularly affects the interests of this Division. On Friday 15th September I shall be substituting for a colleague on the People and Communities Select Committee.

Contact me

You can contact me on Catherine.rowett.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk for Council-related business, and I look forward to helping with a range of issues that people have already brought to my attention, including the anaerobic digester issue in Bressingham and the pylons, but also dangerous roads and other issues.

I also have a facebook page which will include updates on what I am working on, posts about events and opportunities relevant to residents, and a place where you can comment and leave your views

on things I want to ask you about. The link is here:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100095138285501>

Other County Council news

A few items to mention from the County Council more generally:

Midlife MOT

The Department of Work and Pensions is providing funding to offer what they call a Midlife MOT. It's designed to help people aged between 45-55 to make the best of their lives, covering work, your personal finances (including planning for being able to retire), and your health.

Work - Build your confidence, learn new skills, and assess your internal progression options.

Wealth - Better understand the financial implications of retirement, get help from the Money and Pensions Advice Service and make plans for how to maximise the value of your remaining years of employment.

Wellbeing – Improve your health for later life, with free support to stop smoking, be more active, maintain a healthy weight and manage your mental wellbeing.

It's completely free and government funded! Find out more here:

<https://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/people/news/2023/midlife-mot>

Pension Awareness week 11th-15th September

Pension Awareness 2023 will host an entire week of live online expert shows about pensions and money. We'll be covering everything from combining pots, the State Pension, withdrawing your money, tax or budgeting...you name it, Pension Awareness has got it. There are few better ways of looking after your financial future than with focused 45-minute sessions where you can chat to other savers and feel like you're getting to grips with your future like never before. Find out more here: [5 reasons not to miss Pension Awareness 2023 - Pension Awareness Day](#)

Norfolk Bus Service Improvement Plan

Norfolk has received £30.9m of capital funding and £18.6m of revenue funding for improved bus services, to fund plans that include 17 new measures to give buses priority on the roads. These include new bus lanes in Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth and redesigned junctions across the county.

New or improved travel hubs are proposed for Sheringham, Cromer, Diss and Hunstanton. These will provide better waiting areas with real-time information to help to give passengers a better experience. They will also be integrated with walking and cycling facilities.

There will also be a county-wide review of bus stops with upgrades to improve access for people with disabilities, to provide more real-time information and a programme of works to reduce delays to buses.

Preventing floods

Small, simple steps that ensure water can drain away from your home can cut down the likelihood of flooding: e.g. keeping drains, ditches, and watercourses clear. Many ditches and watercourses will benefit from clearing branches, and cutting back new undergrowth. Early autumn is a good moment for property owners to put in a little work to keep their properties safe.

A build-up of flood water with nowhere to drain can quickly turn a minor incident into a disaster for the home. By starting off small, and checking drains for any blockages such as mud, leaves and stones, residents can take the first step towards mitigating the impact of flooding.

Outside the home, if residents spot any blocked or broken drains on Norfolk's highways, they can report it via www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding, allowing Norfolk's Highways Team to clear them and keep our roads open.

More information [here](#).

Catherine Rowett

8th September 2023