

Councillor report, November 2023, from Catherine Rowett

November 6th 2023

Flood reporting

Flooding from surface water is a County Council responsibility.

There are two routes to report flooding on the County Council website, and I would encourage people to do this because the County needs to know how bad the problem is and take action to stop it being repeated. This applies to both flooding on the roads and flooding in your house, shop, workshop or other amenities.

For highways you can report it here: <https://apps.norfolk.gov.uk/highwaysdefect/?s=road&t=flood>

For other flooding crises you can report it here: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/floods/report-a-flood>

If you think that the problem is caused by blocked or silted up ditches and culverts, or stuff blocking the route across the verge from the road to the ditch, contact the highways (if the ditch is a highways ditch along the side of the road). If the problem is a ditch on the land owned by a local farmer, the first port of call is to contact the farmer and point out the issue, and ask the farm itself to do the clearance. If that fails, the Parish Council can make a formal request, or the Parish could set up a volunteer group to help people to clear their ditches and do a round every Autumn to make sure that everything is flowing ahead of the winter.

Will reporting a flood damage the value of your property? Not really, because any remaining flood risk will count against your property anyway when it comes to selling, so it's better to get the Council onto solving it, so that the risk is removed, and insurance premiums can be reduced accordingly. The Council can't get a sense of the extent of the problem unless all the major flooding in properties is reported.

Please also let me know if the village is suffering repeated and problematic flooding and you are not getting a prompt response from the Council.

More information [here](#).

County Council budget

NCC faces what they call a "significant challenge" to develop a budget for 2024/2025 given yet more expected cuts in what we get from government. A shortfall of £46 million is predicted. A 4.99% increase on council tax is proposed. The public consultation is now open and can be accessed [here](#).

Residents can request the budget consultation in other formats, including paper form, by calling 0844 800 8020 or emailing HaveYourSay@norfolk.gov.uk in line with our standard practice. This will include Braille, audio etc.

Deadline 7th November!! Norfolk Community Foundation "Community Hot Spots" fund

Norfolk County Council are supporting Norfolk Community Foundation's 'Community Hot Spots fund' again this year. Grants of up to £2,000 are available to contribute towards the cost of running or establishing a Community Hot-Spot that gives a warm welcome to the whole community, in particular reaching those who are vulnerable or have been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. A Community Hot-Spot is a warm space for people to take a break from the cold and connect with others over the winter months.

The application process is open now until 07 November and interested groups can find out more and apply here:

[Community Hot-Spot Fund | Norfolk Community Foundation \(norfolkfoundation.com\)](https://norfolkfoundation.com)

Highways and road safety:

I now have a spreadsheet of suitable schemes for the RSCF and am waiting for an appointment to work with the Highways officer to prioritise the ones I can submit. It is annoying that I am unlikely to get more than one or two of these deserving schemes funded, and that the speed management strategy makes it very hard to get the speed limit reductions that would prevent accidents until after the accidents have happened. I am therefore attempting to get the Council to agree democratically to move towards a more proactive approach to safety and speed limits, so that people can feel safe going out and about with or without dogs, horses, or children on bikes.

Long Stratton Bypass:

The Long Stratton Bypass has now got planning permission from South Norfolk District Council. I'm due to have an on-site visit to see where it is supposed to connect with the old road, and what route it will take across unspoiled land (it had to be postponed because I was laid up with a bad cold last week). I would be interested to hear the views of West Depwade residents and parish councils. I shall be keeping an eye on the supposed "biodiversity net gain" and "carbon neutral" claims, given the recent scandals of hundreds of thousands of dead trees on the Northern Distributor Road and the A14.

Buses and active travel

The County Council has a new website that enables you to check for any journey you need to make whether there is a suitable way to get there by bus, train, bicycle, walking, or some combination of these things, and compares the time, cost and carbon footprint of each mode of travel, including car travel, so that you can see if there is a better/quicker/cheaper or less damaging way to get to the place you need to go. It's interesting, though rather depressing when I ask it for public transport routes to the villages in my County division! Fun to play with and could be very interesting for children at the school to investigate the carbon footprint of their journeys and to work out how to manage them without emitting so much planet-killing stuff. Find it here: [Journey Planner - Travel Norfolk](#).

Scrutiny Committee

On Tuesday 31st October at Scrutiny Committee, which is the opportunity to question problematic delegated decisions, we challenged the unilateral decision by the Highways Cabinet Member to undo the pedestrianisation of Exchange Street in Norwich City Centre, and make it a through route for motor traffic during shopping hours as well as during the evening and early morning. The decision appears to go against the Council's own commitments to ensure that 50% of journeys in Norfolk's towns and cities are walking, cycling or wheeling, and conflicts with the City's net zero strategy and with the County Council's climate strategy and the ambitions of Active Norfolk. It will also make the experience of walking up from St Andrews Street car park to the city centre during Christmas shopping extremely unpleasant since the pavements are too narrow for the volume of pedestrians, and it is a key cycle route with cyclists running down both sides of what will become a stationary queue of polluting traffic. Scrutiny committee has an overwhelming majority of members from the Conservative administration, so although all three opposition parties were united in opposition to the decision, the committee rejected to call in and confirmed the cabinet member's decision.

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. I'm always delighted to attend award ceremonies, events, centenaries, lectures, exhibitions, conferences, debates, litter picking parties, campaign events and protests, so don't hesitate to add me to your mailing lists! I also have a facebook page which includes 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](#).

County Council campaign for the month:

Prevent food waste

Who'd have thought we needed to tell people that you don't have to throw away potatoes if they start to sprout?! In Norfolk we discard acres-worth of good edible food, and it's hugely damaging to the environment and wasteful of farmland which could easily supply us all without imports if we just ate the food instead of throwing it away! Here's a website about how to spread the word and get people more savvy about using food that's not gone rotten.

[Mission Savvy — Food Savvy](#)

PS Don't forget to get your flu jab if you are eligible.

Catherine Rowett

6th November 2023