

Hockering Parish Council

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REPORT of the **Annual Parish Meeting** held on Tuesday 14th May 2024 at the Village Hall, Hockering.

Cllrs Present at the Meeting: Cllrs J Blackwell (Chair), R Neave and L Parker. Cllr Cocker arrived at 7.45pm.

Also Present: County Cllr Bill Borrett, 2 members of the public and the Parish Clerk. District Councillor Gordon Bambridge arrived at 7.50pm.

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence** - Cllr B Higgins sent his apologies.
2. **To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23rd May 2023** - The minutes of this meeting were reviewed at the August 2023 meeting and signed.
3. **To receive reports from:**
 - a) **Parochial Church Council** – Rev Tori said she was pleased to report that a Churchwarden had been appointed. The coffee mornings were very popular and well attended. Mark will be leaving and his final service is on Sunday 26th May at 10.00am and Rev Tori will be leaving later this year. The Church has welcomed children from the village school for special services and also joined pupils in school. She thanked everyone for their continued support.
 - b) **Hockering Life** – Cllr Cocker reported that copy for the next issue is needed by the end of the month ready for the June issue. Unfortunately, due to time pressures from her other commitments to the Parish Council and the Football Club, she is no longer able to continue to edit Hockering Life. Unless a replacement is found this might mean that future issues need to be in a simplified Newsletter format. The Chairman thanked her for all the excellent work she has done in producing such a professional magazine during the past year.
 - c) **Hockering Primary Academy** – a report was received from the school and is attached to these minutes, together with the report of the recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). In brief, the school currently has 35 pupils on roll and they enjoy many outings and enrichment activities. They have plans for using a disused, overgrown garden area of the school grounds to create a useable nature area. The Friends of Hockering School have been busy designing, fund-raising and applying for grants to enable this work to proceed. A Baby & Toddler Group is starting in May and will take place once a month on a Friday afternoon in the school hall. The school has successfully merged into a federation of four schools, renamed as Eden Federation, and they have a vacancy for a Governor if anyone is interested in joining the Governing Body.
 - d) **Friends of Hockering School** – a full report is attached to these minutes which gives details of their progress since starting a year ago. They have held many successful events which have generated funds to provide the children with extra-curricular opportunities. Together with grants from Tesco Blue Token Scheme, Norfolk Gardens Trust and Aviva Employee Match fundraising scheme, nearly £6,000 has been raised. This has been used to buy a new laptop, costumes for school events, paid for Year 6 Leavers' activities and tickets for the entire school to go to a Christmas Pantomime. The future goals include working with the school to establish a school garden and helping to run the Baby & Toddler Group.

- e) **Poor and Townlands Charity** – it was reported that the Charity is solvent at the moment and anyone needing help can get in touch with Cllr Rosemary Neave. The Charity own two cottages which are in the process of being refurbished.
- f) **Hockering Football Club** – Cllr Cocker reported that at a recent meeting, Breckland District Council had agreed to fund the installation of floodlighting which will mean that the Club does not have to pay to use other football grounds during the winter months. The Club is actively following up further grant possibilities to fund improvements to the club house and other areas. The Football Club have arranged to donate their old kit to an organisation in Kenya to distribute to local clubs.
- g) **Village Hall Committee** – Mr Leslie reported that the refurbishment of the kitchen is almost complete, together with repairs to the emergency doors and the electrics in the main hall will be improved to include additional sockets. The full report is attached to these minutes.
- h) **Hockering Woods** – the Hutton family reported that they are pleased to continue to grant open public access to the Wood between 1st April and 31st August 2024 between 10.00am and 4.00pm on each day, subject to the conditions set out on their website: www.hockeringwood.com. They do stress, however, that no dogs are allowed in the Wood, access is only during the hours above, entrance is through the pedestrian gate at the north of the Woods off Stone Lane and the need to keep to the concrete rides and not to wander into the woodland. The full report is attached.
- i) **Breckland District Councillor** — Gordon Bambridge reported that the likelihood of a new town near Billingford has been shelved for the moment; the draft Breckland Local Plan is open for consultation between the 3rd June and the 15th July and once approved should last for the next 15-20 years. He also said how impressed he was with the work Hockering Football Club are doing for the young of the area and he will do all he can to support them as the District Councillor. His full report is attached to these minutes.
- j) **Norfolk County Councillor** – Bill Borrett reported on the current situation with regard to the Western Link and the delays caused by obtaining a certificate from Natural England concerning bat conservation before Planning Permission can be granted. The Government gave agreed to fund the project but nothing can be done until a Government enquiry gives its findings on Natural England's powers. Cllr Borrett's full report is attached to these minutes.

4. Open Forum for Public Participation – Concerns were expressed that speeding in the village is a problem and that if planning applications are received for housing developments the Planning Authorities should insist on building in 'Hedgehog Highways'.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited them to stay for the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

Signed Date

Reports are attached from:

Hockering Primary Academy, including SIAMS Report

Friends of Hockering School

Village Hall Committee

Hockering Woods

Breckland District Councillor

Norfolk County Councillor

Report from Hockering Primary Academy

Hockering Church of England Primary Academy currently has thirty-five children on roll this school year and what a busy year it has been so far! The children have made visits to a variety of places to enrich their education. They have learnt all about the Tudors at Stranger's Hall museum back in September. We visited the Tolhouse Museum in Great Yarmouth in January, as part of our 'crime and punishment' topic. The children were immersed in punishments that took place in the Victorian era and had to decide whether it was a fair prison or not. All the children have attended PE trips around the county, including a dodgeball competition at the UEA, a football festival at Goals, a gymnastics festival at Easton Gymnastics Club and a fantastic dance show at The Space in Norwich. In addition to this, last week we chose four year 5 children to take part in a maths challenge at Norwich School where they enjoyed a myriad of maths challenges and puzzles. We are looking forward to our KS2 residential to Eaton Vale in the summer and a whole school trip to Pensthorpe nature reserve in July.

On the grounds of Hockering Primary Academy, we currently have a disused, overgrown garden area. The Friends of Hockering have kindly taken on this school garden project. Together as a school and as a Friends committee, we aim to create a useable nature area where we can integrate outdoor learning into our curriculum. A lot of thought and effort has gone into the nature area, to create a mosaic of zones to enable fulfilment of a number of beneficial activities, including areas for gardening, for nature, space for building and places for mindful relaxation and connectivity with the natural world. The FOHS have been busy designing, fund raising and applying for grants to raise capital funds. See design below.

The local community have also been invested in the creation of a school nature garden, and volunteers have come forward to clear the proposed area and construct pathways, raised beds and composting areas. The FOHS intend to establish a voluntary gardening group to manage and maintain the garden, which will actively involve the local community by allowing them to engage with the grounds and observe some of the activities the pupils have been undertaking.

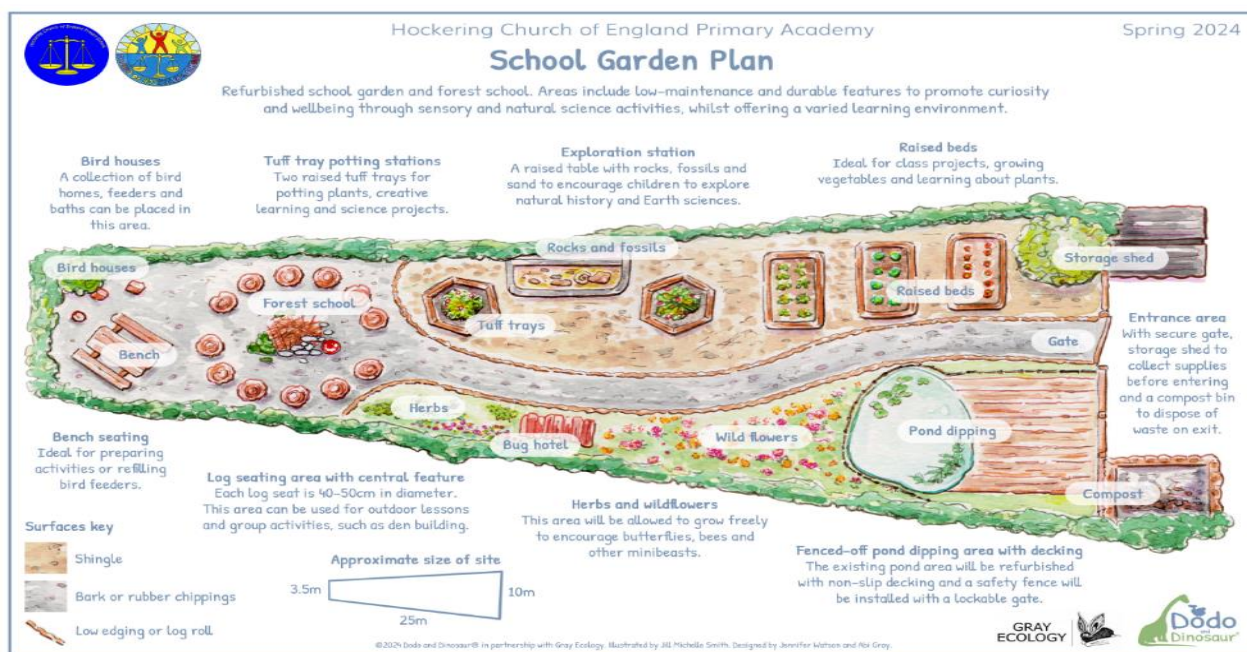
This May, the school will see the return of a 'baby and toddler group' being held at Hockering Primary Academy. A member of the village has set up the baby and toddler group to provide a community group for parents around the village. These will take place once a month on a Friday afternoon in the school hall. This will be an excellent opportunity for parents to see the school ahead of their child starting in the future.

Finally, on 7th March, we had our statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist School inspection. Our vision is based on the parable of the Lost sheep – Jesus loves everyone and no one is left behind. 1 Corinthians 16:14 'Let all that you do be done in love.' The

inspection was a positive experience and here are just some of the strengths highlighted in the report:

- Leaders actively demonstrate a robust understanding of what it means to be a Church school. Care and compassion underpin the vision that drives their actions.
- Effective partnerships across the federation and trust have a positive impact on the school's Christian vision. This strengthens and extends provision. As a result, staff expertise is enhanced.
- The impact of the vision means that there is an inclusive culture. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are vulnerable thrive here. Every child is supported to flourish.
- Collective worship is valued by adults and pupils. It is a coming together of the school community and as such positively impacts school life. It is supported by effective partnerships with the local church.
- Enquiry driven religious education (RE) engages pupils. The subject's effectiveness is greatly enhanced by the access to high quality professional development.

The full report can be found on our school website. We have this year successfully merged into a federation of four schools, welcoming Cawston Primary Academy School. We have renamed as Eden Federation. Anyone who is interested in joining the Governing Body of Eden Federation would be very welcome as we do have a current vacancy.



Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

Hockering Church of England Primary Academy	
Address	The Street, Hockering, East Dereham, NR20 3HN
School vision	
<p>Our vision is based on the parable of the Lost sheep – Jesus loves everyone and no one is left behind. 1 Corinthians 16:14 ‘Let all that you do be done in love’</p> <p>Nurture creative, resilient, confident, independent learners who are curious about the world around them.</p> <p>Nourish learners by providing exciting, inclusive, challenging, spiritually enriching opportunities within a safe learning environment.</p> <p>Enable learners to flourish into aspirational, courageous, advocates for change in a local and global context.</p>	
School strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders actively demonstrate a robust understanding of what it means to be a Church school. Care and compassion underpin the vision that drives their actions. • Effective partnerships across the federation and trust have a positive impact on the school’s Christian vision. This strengthens and extends provision. As a result, staff expertise is enhanced. • The impact of the vision means that there is an inclusive culture. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are vulnerable thrive here. Every child is supported to flourish. • Collective worship is valued by adults and pupils. It is a coming together of the school community and as such positively impacts school life. It is supported by effective partnerships with the local church. • Enquiry driven religious education (RE) engages pupils. The subject’s effectiveness is greatly enhanced by the access to high quality professional development. 	
Areas for development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop further the language for expressing spirituality across the school. This is to enable pupils to explore the spiritual aspects of their learning in a range of curriculum areas. • Extend pupil opportunities for positive social action. This is to ensure that they have the chance to engage in worthwhile causes that are meaningful to them. • Further enhance the provision of collective worship by training and equipping leaders. This is to strengthen the impact it is having on pupils’ lives and their spiritual development. 	
Inspection findings	
<p>The vision statement ‘Let all that you do be done in love,’ is linked with the parable of the lost sheep. This provides a focus for the academy that drives actions to make sure that every pupil is cherished.</p>	

Leaders understand, articulate and model the vision. Consequently, pupils are known and cared for. The values of nurture, nourish and flourish underpin school culture at every level. This results in an environment in which the unique nature of each child is tended to so that they can thrive. The school's strategic direction develops staff and builds partnerships. This further strengthens the provision and opportunity for each child. Support and collaboration across the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT) and the Eden federation are central to this. Governors have a very clear understanding of their role. They provide robust evaluation of the consistency of the academy's Christian foundation through various activities. The monitoring of the ethos committee has resulted in a thorough understanding of the provision.

The curriculum offered reflects the academy's vision. Being part of the trust and federation enhances its strength. This is through support, access to expertise, training and collaborative activities. Pupils engage in many varied learning opportunities. These include singing at the O2, taking part in the Maths Challenge, djembe drumming, learning the ukulele and swimming lessons. These activities enrich pupil experience. Staff work hard to meet the needs of each child. This is achieved through targeted support and small group learning. Spaces are adapted and utilised well to provide focused teaching areas for smaller groups. This supports their academic development. There is an inclusive culture of equality. This is because of an effective determination to realise the vision, making sure that every child has the best provision. SEND is a priority. Parents champion the provision for their children acknowledging the care, compassion and nurture offered. As a result of this pupils are confident, active and engaged in their learning.

Collective worship reflects the academy's foundation as a Church school. Daily acts are an important time for pupils and staff to come together as a community. This positively impacts spiritual development and fosters a sense of belonging. Pupils consider the world around them with awe and wonder. However, a shared language of spirituality is not widely used across the school. The structure and format of daily worship include a variety of storytelling, bible stories, prayer, reflection and singing. This has a positive impact on pupil experience. Worship is successfully enhanced by partnerships with the local church. The academy has good links with the clergy who enrich the provision. Materials for the delivery of collective worship are shared and developed across the federation. This effective planning means that the experience of worship is varied and promotes pupils' spiritual flourishing. However, staff training in delivering collective worship is underdeveloped. Pupil engagement and enjoyment in singing is evident in worship and at celebration services. Reflective spaces in classrooms successfully further opportunities for stillness and prayer.

The vision is lived out in the provision for the academic, social and emotional needs of the pupils. The school community is an inclusive one where all are valued, feel safe and respected. Children who are vulnerable and those with SEND flourish. Wellbeing is a priority as a result of the vision and values. The parable of the Lost Sheep not only drives the academic focus but also the pastoral support offered. Pupils are celebrated as individuals and complimenting each other is part of everyday practice. This creates a culture of care and compassion as they recognise the talents and achievements of all. Strong partnerships across the federation and trust prioritise the development of staff. The collaborative nature of the Eden federation has enhanced teacher expertise. This has benefited their professional development. Teachers across the federation work together to effectively plan and support each other. As a result, workload is shared and this has a positive impact on wellbeing while strengthening provision. Ambassador groups within the DNEAT trust further develops staff expertise.

Justice and responsibility are evident in the school culture and learning focus. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education addresses matters of difference and diversity. This effectively includes challenging stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. Additionally,

responsibility towards others is evident in learning experiences. Justice is further addressed through enrichment activities. The visit to the 'Toll House Museum' examined the idea of crime and punishment. Justice and responsibility are highlighted in the activity of the pupils on the 'Green Team'. This group are pupil representatives who have been instrumental in making environmental decisions for the benefit of the community. This includes working effectively with outside agencies including 'Anglian Water' to monitor and preserve this precious resource in school. Pupils' eco-friendly activities include working with other agencies to develop the pond area. Consequently, they recognise their responsibility to take action and care for the environment.

Leaders and governors have ensured that the provision and profile of RE is effective. It is well-sequenced and taught through an enquiry approach. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It builds subject knowledge and understanding year on year. Diocesan training is also accessed and enhances expertise. The RE ambassadors group has been a valuable hub, providing regular support and continuing professional development for leaders. Floor books are used for pupils to collate their thinking and discussion. These provide strong evidence of how the curriculum is relevant and engaging. These books have become an effective tool for pupils to reflect on their learning. However, opportunities to understand Christianity as a Global faith could be further explored.

RE lessons are engaging. This is a result of effective professional development, monitoring and teacher support. Pupils explore and examine ideas by asking big questions. They critically engage with a range of religions and worldviews. Learning opportunities include the study of other cultures and beliefs. In RE pupils make progress in their learning, although their understanding of key terms and concepts is not always clear. Regular use is made of assessment to effectively track pupil progress and identify gaps in learning.

The inspection findings indicate that Hockering Church of England Primary Academy is living up to its foundation as a Church school.

Information			
Inspection date	7 March 2024	URN	142589
VC/VA/Academy	Academy	Pupils on roll	35
Diocese	Norwich		
MAT/Federation	The Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust		
Executive Headteacher	Rebecca Newman		
Chair	Rev Andrew Whitehead		
Inspector	Claire Gibson	No.	2227

Report from Friends of Hockering School

It has been a whole year since the FOHS formed and what an amazing first year we have had. We started off as a small group of parents wanting to assist the school in providing the best opportunities for all children, improving school facilities and building on relationships within our local community. We ran our first event in May 2023 (a small cake sale to celebrate the King's Coronation - with no idea of what to expect) however the turn out and money raised was more than we could have imagined for just an hour! We have gone on to plan many more successful fundraising events over the past year and the money generated from these events has been used to provide the children with some amazing extra-curricular opportunities.

Events have included cake sales, discos, quizzes, and second-hand clothing donations – we have a new collection this month on Thursday 23rd May so please pop your unwanted clothes into binbags and drop off at the village all before 9am on that date. We also organised the 2023 Hockering Summer Fun Day and look forward to working with the Parish Council for the 2024 Village Fete on 18th August: save the date!

We have been very lucky to secure funding for some fantastic projects and are very thankful to these schemes and businesses, such as being awarded £500 from the Tesco Blue Token Scheme for new sporting equipment, £200 from Norfolk Gardens Trust towards the new school garden, and nearly £1000 from the Aviva Employee Match fundraising scheme.

With the nearly £6000 of funds generated throughout the year, we have bought a new laptop for the school, bought costumes for school events, paid for the Year 6 Leavers activities, bought tickets for the entire school to go to a Christmas Pantomime, and have agreed to annually subsidise school trips to keep these affordable for families.

Our 2024 goals include working closely with the school to establish a school garden which will be open for community events, helping run a new baby/toddler group at the school, as well as looking into the potential to fund a new outdoor classroom.

Friends of Hockering School is open to all to join, not just parents, carers and guardians of pupils, and if anyone is interested in coming on board to help us support our local school, please do get in touch via facebook or our email address (friendsofhockeringsschool@gmail.com).

Report from Village Hall

Bookings for the hall are reasonably steady:

We have:

Yoga weekly on a Wednesday

Kung Fu weekly on a Friday

Fuchsia Soc – monthly except over winter

Dancing monthly on a Monday

Saturday Coffee morning 10-12pm, monthly

Community café 10-12pm, 2nd and 4th Wednesday

Parish Council meetings monthly

Plus parties, christenings, school events

Sadly, 'Hide and Sniff' the dog group, have expanded and found another home and Bingo is no longer taking place.

Maintenance: *we have had work done on the roof, to prevent ingress of rain, and replacement of rotting emergency doors to the kitchen.*

Thanks go to Dean Clarke (our new Chairman, following resignation of Mick Mason) who has kept the grass mown around the hall.

Major work: a refurbishment of the kitchen is almost complete. New hob and extractor, water heater, built-in fridge, all new work surfaces.

Proposed work: further update of the electrics has been quoted for, to provide more sockets within the hall and an outside socket.

Expanding the car park by using plastic reinforcing membranes on the south part of the grassed area.

Replacing the ageing upholstered chairs with new.

Other issues: following the departure of Blue and Matt from the village, the 'allotment area' has been taken back to the village hall.

Richard Hawker
Trustee
11 May 2024

Report from Hockering Wood

TUESDAY 14 MAY 2024

The Hutton Family is pleased to continue to grant open public access to the Wood between 1 April and 31 August 2024, between the hours of 10am and 4pm on each day, subject to the conditions set out on the website

The Family is pleased to note the enjoyment which walking in the Woods gives to people from the Village and beyond. They do stress, however:

- the importance of no dogs in the Wood;
- no access before 10am and after 4pm;
- entrance only through the pedestrian gate at the north of the Woods off Stone Lane; and
- the need to keep to the concrete rides and not to wander off into the woodland.

I should emphasise that Hockering is a working Wood, though forestry operations will not be conducted after March and before September in each year

Any questions or observations for the Family may be fed through either Margaret Ridgwell, Parish Clerk, or Jonty Blackwell, Chair of the Hockering Parish Council.

Report from Gordon Bambridge, District Councillor

Report from Gordon Bambridge, District Councillor for Annual Parish Meeting.

This year has been for me personally a year of change and for Breckland Council a year when many achievements have been made and new goals set. To Breckland first. The council has made real

progress on over 50 areas where promises were made and kept from our manifesto at the last election. I have attached as a separate document the list for you to consider, but they fall into the four main areas where we promised to work for the whole community. Some of these may apply to all of you, and some to only some of you but I am proud that during my time in Breckland we have always achieved movement for the community as a whole.

The four areas are:

Breckland 2035

Which is the overarching name for getting a carbon neutral council by 2035, and by and large not by buying credits. So from community and individual composting, to planting thousands of trees, to car charging points, to supporting businesses, to litter pick and enforcement to keep our community clean - we have made a start on achieving this goal

Thriving Places

Is our target for ensuring established and new businesses can thrive and that our communities can grow in all ways and be more pleasant places for us all to live in. In doing this we have managed to lever in much additional funding across the district despite this being 'hard times' all around, Some of these you may have seen announced in the media, some still to be announced. Breckland has always been a council that is not too proud to seek outside funding and partnerships to ensure we provide the best for our communities, whilst at the same time keeping the district council tax the lowest.

Inspiring Communities

From individual grants to families in hard times, to housing advice and supporting abused people. To promoting mental wellbeing with over 300 mental health champions trained in the district. The Food Bus, and the community supermarket, to helping 3000 residents with housing advice. Working with young people and the police, with dog wardens and local charities Breckland are fulfilling their commitments

Working Smarter

We have performance indicators and are continually holding ourselves to these, debated in most council meetings - which you can watch, all key meetings are online live or recordings. We seek to work transparently, and if you have a case going with the council you will be increasingly able to follow progress online. Already we are offering advice on many matters online with AI and by telephone 24/7 using electronic systems whilst maintaining the office hours human contacts. Gaining many national awards for the council over the last year building on the time we spent during the pandemic modernising the building and workplace Breckland is now number one on preferred places to work.

To me as a councillor:

I have represented around half of the ward now for 21 years, and the other half for around 13 years since the last reorganisation of council ward boundaries, and as I have shared with some of you that is all happening again this year for the next election in 2027.

Since May 2023 I am no longer a cabinet member at Breckland but as your representative I do still attend most council meetings and actively represent every resident of Upper Wensum within the district council system. I am also in regular contact with our MP George Freeman, where necessary also contacting government departments directly, and with the County Council supporting Bill Borett who doubles as a district and county councillor. However, on matters concerning the ward I also lobby directly as is deemed necessary.

Many councillors also represent the district in other areas (it's called an outside body) For my part I represent Breckland on the Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board. This obviously impacts on our ward, but also many other wards across Northern Breckland so it involves working with them also to a certain extent. Because I have held this position for over 20 years I have progressed up and sit on other organisations and attend meetings on drainage management in Westminster and across the region dealing with both government and shadow ministers and with such as the EA from time to time. These additional positions for the council are entirely unpaid, and do of course take up time, but I find that apart from expanding my horizons it does enhance my ability to better represent you to Breckland and beyond. This could be seen for example when Storm Babet caused flooding in Breckland last October, I was able to extend the reach of our influence supporting both individuals and communities.

Planning matters take up much of a councillor's time. Breckland is the planning authority for the area, but lately Nutrient Neutrality has slowed down all housing related applications, this has tended to make more work for me rather than less. Whatever your view on this may be, the fact of an organisation like Natural England bringing in regulations like this without attention to mitigation I find appalling. We do now seem to be edging towards some sort of solution. On planning matters I generally take my lead from the parish but always also have to hear all sides of every situation so will speak to applicants and developers alike

On a similar subject, most councils, indeed whole communities, are against unchecked development. However, the district has targets for housing to meet. On this matter I tend to stand with the individual parish council, which leaves me sometimes a bit schizophrenic, some want a little growth, others a bit more, others perhaps substantially more growth. And all of this is predicated on the size of the community and the facilities within. I believe within this ward we do have some very mature and tolerant opinions on the matters of growth. My stance on the matter is that I will always support the view of the parish, but that most communities (not all) do need a little growth, to support their shop/pub/bus/school etc. I do believe that most larger villages should consider a neighbourhood plan.

I do believe that most communities would support an exception site which is where a small development of truly affordable dwellings are built with local support for local people in perpetuity. And I am happy to talk through these issues.

On wider matters:-

I have opposed the proposed New Town on land encompassed Billingford/Bintree/Elmham mainly in two wide ranging areas encompassed by infrastructure and environment, I noted that some 45 communities opposed this, many in Breckland but also from North Norfolk and Broadland areas, and I am happy to discuss this (it was the most raised matter during the recent election)

I have supported the dualling of the A47 on the basis that improved access will enhance all of our communities. (It does affect me personally)

I support the proposed Western Link Road on the basis that every one of the fifteen villages in the ward are adversely affected by its lack to a greater or lesser extent. The A1067 and every Southward road off it to Guist and beyond have become rat runs because it is not there. All of Northern Norfolk suffers because the Norwich Northern Bypass was not made a complete circular road around the city.

Again I am happy to discuss these matters

I am acutely aware that with fifteen villages I do miss a lot of parish meetings, I am sorry for that. In addition to your parish council and other necessary meetings I do also need to keep up with the few Breckland meetings held in the evenings and others such as the police SNAP. Also sometimes there are two, three or even four parish meetings on the same night.

What I will say is that I am always available to meet with parish clerks, chairmen or councillors outside of the usual parish meeting. Day or evening. I will also make time to meet parishioners singly or preferably in groups. This can be in your parish or at Breckland office, or on site if appropriate.

Gordon Bambridge
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Report from Bill Borrett, County Councillor - Member for the Elmham and Mattishall Division

Norfolk County Council

- 97.4% of highways inspections completed within timescale
- 96.8% of 'Priority A' defects (classified as dangerous/emergency) were fixed within the Transport Asset Management Plan timescales
- 95% Customer satisfaction (with Council Services)
- 96% of Looked after Children with an up-to-date Personal Education Plan
- Completed over 90,000 Adult Social Care Assessments for over 26,000 people

Norfolk in numbers

Everything you need to know about our incredible county



1/3 of the UK's gas supply provided by Bacton Gas Terminal



50% of the UK's 10.4GW offshore wind power generated in Norfolk

42

fire stations



750

fire fighters



47

libraries



421

schools



£19 billion contributed to the national economy

6,159

miles of road

39,500

businesses

2,074

square miles



£3 billion a year tourism industry

£1.803 billion

annual revenue budget for Norfolk County Council



223,900

aged 64 and over

918,369

residents

147,263

school age children

90 miles of coastline

409,124 homes



11,000+ businesses in financial and professional services

2,400 miles of walks, cycle and bridle routes



£1.44 billion a year in agricultural production



3,000+ scientists and clinicians working in food, health and life science

Council agrees £528m budget

Councillors have backed a budget that "delivers for Norfolk", in the face of major challenges facing local government.

Deputy council leader Councillor Andrew Jamieson, cabinet member for finance, told today's full council meeting that the budget would deliver for Norfolk. This is despite major cost and demand pressures facing all councils.

He said: "Our priorities are stable and sustainable finances, well delivered public services, economic growth and protecting and enhancing Norfolk's heritage and environment."

Cllr Jamieson said it was a budget for the future, with an additional £60m for adult social services and £35m extra for children's services, and savings from transforming how the council operates.

Cllr Jamieson pledged to continue to lobby the next Government for multi-year settlements, fair funding and reform of adult social care funding.

County Council leader, Councillor Kay Mason Billig, said the council would continue to be ambitious for Norfolk and had achieved many successes - against a tough economic backdrop.

She said: "We know that our residents will be concerned about the decisions we make and how that may affect them. This year's budget has been one of the toughest to determine but we have a statutory duty to provide a balanced position, and that is what we are presenting to you."

The key headlines from the budget agreed today are:

- £122m of investment to meet demand and cost pressures next year - including £34.6m for inflation, £38m for legislative requirements, £39.7m for demand and demographic issues and £9.6m for policy decisions.
- £41.5m of new savings, including £9.6m from transforming how the council operates.

- A proposed 4.99% increase in the County Council's share of Council Tax, in line with the Government's capping level (2.99% for general Council Tax and 2% for adult social care). This would increase the Council's share of band D bills to £1,672.11. A 4.99% rise would generate £24.9m.
- A small number of the budget proposals have been identified as requiring consultation, as they may relate to a policy or service change. Cabinet will take decisions on these proposals in the summer, after considering the consultation results.

Norfolk County Council provided extra support to households this Winter

Earlier this year, Norfolk County Council announced it would receive further funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to run the Household Support Fund until 31 March 2024. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the Budget that this funding would be extended by a further six months.

The council has received £13.4m from central government and adding an additional £400,000 to make the total programme of support worth £13.8m. It is working closely with district, borough, and city councils, VCSE and public sector partners to identify and implement a range of support measures to meet the needs of vulnerable households.

Norfolk's roads and footpaths to be fixed as part of £4.51m funding

Thirty-four roads and 20 footpaths across the County will be repaired by Norfolk County Council during this coming year as part of Government funding.

Roads from Great Yarmouth to King's Lynn, from Hunstanton to Thetford and many in between the entire County will receive reclamation spray or resurfacing along with footpath construction to ensure Norfolk's infrastructure can best help people to get to work, travel to services and access Norfolk's natural and cultural assets through effective highways maintenance.

Twenty-seven brand new gritters joined Norfolk's fleet

Twenty-seven brand new gritters took taking to the roads for the first time later this winter in a £3,238,000 boost to the annual push to help keep Norfolk moving safely during the winter months.

The news came as crews completed their first gritting runs of the season at the weekend, treating routes in the west, inland north and south and east coast areas of the county.

Norfolk's fleet of 58 winter vehicles treat 2,200 miles of roads on each full 3-hour gritting run. All A and B-class roads and some C-class roads are treated with a focus on commuter and major bus routes and as far as is possible one route into all villages. The A11 and A47 are gritted by National Highways.

In addition to the 49 gritting routes, a number of pedestrian areas and main pavements are treated in the centre of Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, and more than 2000 grit bins are available around the county for people to use on roads, pavements and cycle paths.

Find more information via www.norfolk.gov.uk/winter

Norfolk flood protection took centre stage in Westminster

The threat posed by flooding and coastal erosion in Norfolk has been laid out starkly for MPs as Norfolk County Council has taken their case for change to the heart of Westminster.

The delegation from Norfolk, led by Norfolk County Council Leader Cllr Kay Mason Billig and the Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance (NSFA), Henry Cator, met with MPs, on the 71st anniversary of the 1953 North Sea Flood, to explain the risks Norfolk faces and how those risks could be addressed.

As demonstrated over this winter, our county faces regular risks of flooding, with Norfolk ranked tenth most at risk of surface water flooding out of 149 local authority areas. In addition, the county's position on the North Sea exposes it to tidal threats as well as significant coastal erosion: without action, it's estimated that in North Norfolk alone approximately 1,030 residential and commercial properties could be lost to erosion by 2100. That number could be up to 10,000 in all of Norfolk.

These risks threaten both Norfolk residents and the contribution Norfolk makes to the wider country, as home to 54% of the offshore wind generation capacity in the UK and a major producer of food.

In a presentation delivered in Portcullis House, part of the Parliamentary Estate in Westminster, Norfolk's delegation made the case for MPs to:

- Push for legislative permission to build reservoirs designed to capture excess water in times of flood, for use in times of drought
- Advocate for Property Flood Protection measures to be granted directly to the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for faster allocation for those who need it
- Reduce bureaucracy by granting greater autonomy in funding allocation for surface water flood mitigation schemes
- Combine enforcement and maintenance powers and responsibilities for LLFA's
- Support the creation of a dedicated Minister for the Coast

Challenges of coastal erosion and flooding discussed by councillors

Norfolk councillors are being invited to renew their call for a dedicated Minister for the Coast, as well as funding from central government for flood defences for Norfolk.

Norfolk County Council's Infrastructure and Development Select Committee considered a report on Coastal Erosion and Flooding in the county at their meeting in February, forming an update to the previous examination of the issue by the council's Scrutiny Committee in November last year.

The report recommends that councillors support the lobbying of central government for more funding for coastal erosion schemes, as well as support the appointment of a Minister for the Coast to give coastal communities a champion sitting within government who can take a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities that such communities face, especially coastal erosion and flooding.

Securing a commitment to such an appointment would give confidence that coastal issues are recognised at the heart of government and that solutions to the threats these communities face will be addressed.

The report spells out the challenge posted by coastal erosion along Norfolk's 90 miles of coastline, including the predictions of possible sea level rises of up to 1.15m by the end of the century. To compound the challenge, Norfolk has part of the fastest eroding coastline in North-West Europe.

Without action, it's estimated that in North Norfolk alone approximately 1,030 residential and commercial properties could be lost to erosion by 2105.

The Infrastructure and Development Select Committee meeting was held just over three weeks after the Leader of Norfolk County Council, Cllr Kay Mason Billig, visited Westminster to lay out the need for a new Minister for the Coast to MPs.

£1 million boost for Highway Parish Partnership Schemes

Schemes totalling over £1m will be distributed across Norfolk to deliver the wants and needs of local parishes and residents as part of the Highway Parish Partnership.

The Parish Partnership scheme began in September 2011, when Parish and Town Councils were invited to submit bids for local highway improvements, with the County Council funding up to 50% of bid costs. The key benefits of the scheme are that it:

- Delivers local priorities identified by local people.

- Draws in additional funding for small scale highway improvements, enabling us to collectively deliver more schemes.
- Gives local communities an opportunity to directly influence the improvements in their local area. The programme continues to be well received by Parish/Town Councils, Local Members, and communities. Information about the number of bids received through the scheme over the past twelve years demonstrates there is a good spread across Norfolk.

A County Council contribution £467,884 and a Safety Camera Partnership contribution of £43,760 along with funding from Town and Parish Councils, will enable a programme of local works totalling £1,040,586 to be delivered.

For information on current schemes and if there are Parish Councils who wish to apply for future schemes then contact your County Councillor in the first instance. For further information please see <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/parishpartnerships>

More people 'choose the bus' in Norfolk after first year of bus service improvement plan

It's been just over a year since Norfolk County Council received £49.55m of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) to improve bus services across the county. There have been huge numbers of improvements already made across the county, and the latest figures show that passenger numbers have increased throughout the year with the number of fare-paying passengers now exceeding pre-covid levels.

Passenger numbers across the UK fell dramatically during the covid-19 pandemic with an average drop across the UK of 50.3% but in many areas even more.

Latest figures for Norfolk show that overall bus passenger numbers have increased by 18% in the last year with the number of fare-paying passengers now at 107% compared to pre-pandemic baseline figures. Norfolk is bucking the trend as nationally bus usage figures are at between 89% to 98% of pre-pandemic levels*.

Concessionary pass holders, who have been the slowest to return to using the bus since the pandemic, are now at 83% of pre-pandemic levels and have increased by more than 12% since January this year.

Norfolk received the sixth highest allocation in the country and the funding consists of £30.9m of capital funding and £18.6m of revenue funding.

Approximately £12 million of the funding was allocated to providing new or expanded bus routes and increased service frequencies on key routes, including more evening and weekend services and this has been very much the focus of the spend in this first year of funding.

- A total of 31 enhancements have been made to services this year bringing more regular bus services to 93 parishes with a population of more than 306,000 people.
- There are now more evening services on key routes across 21 parishes in the county including to Dereham, Watton, Thorpe St Andrew and Horsford.
- 49 parishes have an improved Saturday service while 5 parishes are benefitting from improved Sunday services.

In addition to the service enhancements year one of delivering the bus service improvement plan for the county has also seen the following infrastructure improvements.

- The first Travel Norfolk Travel Hub opened in North Walsham providing improved waiting areas with real-time information and integration with walking and cycling facilities.
- A county-wide review of bus stops has started with stops in Hunstanton and Swaffham and Hellesdon being upgraded to our new gold standard.
- 84 accessible bus stop boarding points have been delivered countywide.

Bus travel has also become cheaper this year and offers great value for money thanks not only to the Government fare cap which most operators in Norfolk have signed up to but also 4 local fares offers delivered thanks to the bus service improvement plan:

- £1.50 flat fares for King's Lynn
- £1.50 flat fares for Thetford
- 25% off group, weekly and monthly tickets
- Reduced park & ride fares

*taken from DfT Usage of transport by mode report

More evening bus services out of Norwich thanks to bus service improvement plan

A number of bus services operated by First Eastern Counties have been running more often from thanks to money that Norfolk County Council secured from the Department for Transport (DfT) to improve bus services across the County.

The changes to timetables which started on Sunday 29th October are:

- More evening journeys between the City Centre and Hethersett via Norfolk and Norwich Hospital on the Pink Line 11/11a/12. Hourly journeys will operate every day and these replace existing 13A and 13B journeys to and from the hospital.
- New evening and Sunday journeys on the Green Line to Wymondham and some routes have been extended to Silfield and Harts Farm.
- Sunday and evening journeys on Service 13 shortening journey times between Norwich, Wymondham and Attleborough.
- Green Line services have been renumbered, to make it easier to identify your destination when travelling to the east of the city.
- Services 14 and 14A will operate to and from Dussindale.
- Services 15 and 15A will operate to and from Blofield Heath.
- Services 16 and 16A will operate to and from Lingwood.
- The Purple Line 36/37/38/39 is getting later evening services and improved Sunday services – as well as an extension to the Horsford services to operate to Memorial Road and Flagcutters Way on the Kingfisher Meadow development.
- Thorpe St Andrew will get a new hourly evening service as well as new Sunday journeys on the Red Line 23/24. Previously no evening service the last bus will now depart the city centre for Thorpe St Andrew at 23:08.
- Spixworth will be getting a new hourly service on a Sunday on the Turquoise Line 13 (previously just five journeys on a Sunday).

24/7 free travel to all disabled bus pass holders in Norfolk

From 1 February 2024 all Norfolk residents who hold a disabled concessionary travel pass will be eligible for free bus travel 24 hours a day, seven days a week when travelling within the county.

The decision, which was published today by Norfolk County Council, means that more than 14,500 people across the county who hold a concessionary bus pass due to disability, and their eligible companions, will now be able to travel on any bus at any time free of charge across Norfolk.

Previously concessionary pass holders with a disability were only able to travel for free on buses off-peak (all day on Saturdays and Sundays but only from 09:30 Monday to Friday) except for those registered blind or visually impaired.

Offering free travel at all times is over and above the minimum requirement set by government, and is something that a local authority can choose to do but doesn't have to do. The change was recommended following an updated equality impact assessment of the scheme which concluded that it is now unfair to offer a discretionary enhancement to just one group of disabled people (i.e. those who are blind or visually impaired).

The recommendation agreed by the individual cabinet member was to 'extend the concessionary travel discretion of free travel at all times to all eligible disabled passholders and eligible companions, from 1 February 2024.'

The cost of providing this enhancement is estimated at £50,000 which will be funded by the Council's ring-fenced public transport budget provided by the Department for Transport.

Householders can have free DIY waste disposal for small projects

Norfolk residents have been able to dispose of small amounts of DIY waste at Norfolk's Recycling Centres free of charge from 31st December following changes made by Norfolk County Council.

The change applies to small-scale projects carried out by householders on their own home, allowing them to bring a maximum 100 litres (must fit into 2 x 50l bags) for free or one single item (maximum size of 200cm x 70cm x 75cm). Each household is allowed four free visits with DIY waste every four weeks. Anything beyond this will still be charged at normal rates.

The change in policy follows Government abolishing charges for the disposal of limited amounts and types of DIY waste at recycling centres across the UK.

Prior to 31st December, customers with DIY-type construction and demolition waste will continue to be directed to the 'Pay as you throw service' which is available at all centres.

Traders must continue to pay for DIY waste. For more information visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/DIYwaste

Climate Strategy was launched at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum

Norfolk County Council's Climate Strategy, adopted by Cabinet last May, was launched at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum with special guest Kate Strong, world record holder and endurance cyclist.

The Climate Strategy sets out how the council will work not only to reduce its own carbon emissions, but to drive down emissions across the county, protect the unique environment of Norfolk, and to seize the opportunities the move to a green economy represents, securing investment and growth for Norfolk.

Key proposals include:

- Supporting active and sustainable transport, including further bus improvements and electric vehicle charging
- Providing space for nature and developing a nature recovery strategy
- Retrofitting council buildings to take out gas and oil heating and improve insulation – and encouraging businesses, residents and other organisations to do the same
- Reducing emissions from the council's companies, such as Norse
- Developing the green economy, with support for green skills, sustainable tourism and businesses

- The development of a nature recovery strategy to protect our natural assets and encourage greater biodiversity
- Working with the Tyndall Centre for climate change research at the University of East Anglia, to understand climate change impacts and how Norfolk might adapt to them
- Close collaboration between public sector, business, community and voluntary groups

Norfolk and Suffolk councils given authority and funding to help nature's recovery

Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council have been formally appointed by Government as responsible authorities for preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their respective counties.

This means that they will be working together to help improve wildlife habitats and reverse the decline of biodiversity across the region, working with local communities to develop a tailored nature recovery strategy for their areas.

They will also work with other local planning authorities, the Broads Authority, Natural England, and a wide range of stakeholders and partners, including farming and landowner groups.

This is all part of Government's ambition to further drive nature recovery, with 48 individual local authorities across the country receiving allocations from a £14 million funding pot. Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils will receive £333,000 and £282,000 respectively over two years to fund this work. With the best ways to support nature recovery depending on local character and geography, Local Nature Recovery Strategies will help communities map out the action needed in their area to restore nature.

Norfolk County Council environmental credentials praised in review

Norfolk County Council is doing better than almost every other county council in the country at moving towards net zero, according to an independent assessment.

Campaign group Climate Emergency UK produced scorecards marking action by councils on climate change, including areas such as buildings, transport, planning and biodiversity.

Norfolk was placed joint second with Devon among county councils, with only Oxfordshire ranked higher, after a nine-month assessment process.

Councils were marked according to responses to questions around issues such as retrofitting properties, whether they used electric vehicles, whether they have climate action plans and how high recycling rates are.

Ready to Act new Public Health plan to improve health and wellbeing in Norfolk

Norfolk's new Public Health Strategic Plan prioritises prevention and identifies where Public Health and partners need to focus to improve health and wellbeing in the county.

The plan, being presented to Norfolk County Council's Cabinet, identified opportunities for organisations and communities across the county to promote good health and support people's wellbeing.

These include promoting stop smoking initiatives and encouraging people to take up their free NHS health checks.

The strategic plan, called Ready to Change, Ready to Act details how the Council will work with key partners to help the people of Norfolk to make positive changes to their physical and mental health. It includes work to address the longer-term impacts of the pandemic, such as mental wellbeing, supporting healthy weight and promoting engagement with public health services.

Find out how you could get help from the Household Support Fund at www.norfolk.gov.uk/costofliving

Launch of Working Well Norfolk employment programme

Working Well Norfolk, a £2.7M scheme funded by the Department for Work & Pensions set to help Norfolk residents with long-term health conditions or physical impairments get into work and to stay in work, was officially launched by Cllr Fabian Eagle at the Work, Skills and Wellbeing Fair.

The scheme, managed by Norfolk County Council and run by delivery partners Seetec Pluss and Standguide Ltd aims to provide free personalised 1:1 support to 1,100 people who have physical disabilities or who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties, and to people who are experiencing other long-term sickness or disabilities that impact their daily activities. Participants can be unemployed or currently in work. Interested individuals or businesses should contact Seetec Pluss on 07933 818 986 or see www.seetecpluss/working-well-norfolk to register their interest.

Annual awards recognise dozens of outstanding contributions to Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

Achievements including saving a village from the clutches of wildfire, helping transport a horse mannequin called Brandy, and restoring a fire station flower garden, all received recognition at the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Annual Staff Awards.

The ceremony recognised the efforts of fire fighters, fire staff, their friends and families and community partners and volunteers, showing how everyone has a unique part to play in to make in making the service great.

A total of 16 awards were given in nine categories: Cadet of the Year – Charlie Mirfin of Hunstanton Fire Cadets; On-Call Employers of the Year – Howdens and MN Landscapes; Fundraiser of the Year – Wymondham Watch Manager Tom Diaper; Volunteer of the Year - Dylan Steggles of Hingham; Making a Difference Award – Watch Manager Michelle Lowe, Chris Baker, Let's Talk Mental Health team, and Blue Watch King's Lynn; Partnership Award - Redwings Horse Sanctuary, Inspirational Leader Award – Western Group Manager David Copeland and Prevention Manager Llio Wyn Knight-Griffith; New Employees of the Year Award - Lucy Goldsmith and Jessica Graves; and Team Achievement Award – Crucial Crew and Payroll team.

For more on the individual stories of these awards, which were sponsored by Norfolk Safety CIC and Brancaster Parish Council, [visit our Facebook page](#).

Award-winning Adult Learning service rated 'Good' by Ofsted

Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning has been rated as 'Good' following their latest Ofsted inspection.

The inspection report praised the ambition of the service, which provides community-based and online learning for around 6,000 adults a year. The service achieved a 'Good' rating across all six areas that were inspected, alongside the overall 'Good' rating.

Inspectors commented that learners are 'highly motivated' and committed to their studies. They praised the number of people who have a 'clear plan' for their future careers and that they want to improve their economic prospects.

In particular, inspectors highlighted the work with residents of retirement homes who have increased their confidence, self-care and resilience after completing courses in basic cookery. They commented how, following the course, learners felt less isolated and 'excited to prepare and eat their own meals'.

It was also recognised that the service has responded effectively to the growing demand for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.

There was praise for the work with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service apprentices. The inspectors saw how the course helps them to work safely while learning about the importance of health and nutrition. The report concluded that the 'apprenticeship is well matched to the needs of the fire service.'

This inspection result comes on the back of Norfolk County Council Adult Learning being named 'Further or Higher Education Provider of the Year' at this year's Norfolk Education Awards. This followed national recognition in 2021 where the service was named adult and community learning provider of the year at the TES Further Education Awards.

Norfolk County Council Adult Learning offers a wide range of courses for adults of all levels and interests. Whether you want to change your career, improve your skills, or pursue your passion.

Find out more about Adult Learning and browse the course catalogue at www.norfolk.gov.uk/adultlearning.

More than ten thousand Norfolk children benefit from mental health programme in first year

A children's mental health and wellbeing programme, funded by Norfolk County Council, has supported more than 10,000 in its first year.

The Rise Up programme gives children and young people valuable knowledge and strategies to support their mental health and is being delivered in secondary and special schools across the county. 93% of young people said that their ability to manage their wellbeing improved after completing the programme.

Created and delivered by Future Action, in partnership with Norfolk County Council's Virtual School for Children in Care, Previously in Care and Children with a Social Worker, the course aims to help children build confidence, reduce their anxiety, and create a sustainable wellbeing programme within 90 days.

More than 350 teachers across 62 secondary and special schools in Norfolk have taken part in the online training programme, which delivers a nine-step programme to help support the mental wellbeing of children and young people.

The RISE Up toolbox of strategies, physical activities and comprehensive set of resources allows teachers to deliver classroom and small group-based work which helps young people improve their wellbeing, understanding the challenges facing their mental wellbeing and approaches to overcoming them.

Following the successful partnership between Future Action and the Virtual School for Children in Care, Previously in Care and Children with a Social Worker, Norfolk County Council has commissioned the programme for a second year.

In its second year, the programme aims to embed the programme across more schools and staff to enable teachers:

- To identify individual young people struggling with their mental health and direct them to the specialist support they need as early as possible
- To provide more young people with a range of self-care strategies to protect and build their mental wellbeing to transform their life chances and reduce the pressure on upstream services
- To teach the link between physical activity and mental wellbeing

In addition, the council has commissioned a 'Trauma Informed PE' programme, also delivered by Future Action. The aim of the programme is to:

- Educate PE teachers about the impact of childhood trauma and the eight protective factors

- How colleagues can create psychological safety to transform outcomes in the short and long term
- The link between physical activity, play and mental wellbeing

Secondary and special schoolteachers or teaching assistants within Norfolk can contact futureaction.co.uk to access the courses.

Further information about the Virtual School and the offer to Children in Care, Previously in Care and Children with a Social Worker can be found by emailing Virtual.SchoolsCwSW@norfolk.gov.uk or visiting www.norfolk.gov.uk website.