

Report from your County Councillor, Cllr Steffan Aquarone

Update on Mobile Phone signal

I have now made multiple attempts to get an update from the administration at County Hall regarding their plans to 'work with the Mobile Network Operators to improve rural phone signal'. I have recently been informed that, frustratingly, despite assurances from the Cabinet Member that they would champion the use of community and local government assets, "due to cost and legislation regarding code powers [the mobile network operators] are looking to upgrade existing cell sites rather than use community or local government assets." This appears to be following a closed meeting with the MNOs that I was blocked from attending although I'm told the MNOs may still use some of these sites to trial small cells.

Some more positive progress has been achieved through direct lobbying of the MNOs themselves. You may have read about recent coverage of a thing called "Shared Rural Networks" - the idea being that MNOs share mast infrastructure to ensure users across all providers receive signal. The trouble is, this removes the competitive advantage of the network with the best UK coverage (EE) so negotiations are very much still in progress. Where there is no signal the government has claimed that it is looking to make a large capital investment so there may be some hope here for rural Norfolk despite the commercial conflict.

This is all very frustrating to those of us who continue to be let down by the 'market' for phone coverage, and I am particularly disappointed that the County Council has achieved such little progress.

Cuts hitting disabled

With cuts being made across many services, large numbers of disabled people are being affected. The County Council has announced that it is investigating the impact of these cuts and would like your help.

If you can provide any insights or evidence, either through individual case studies or wide ranging data, that may help support this it would be very useful. The more submissions, the harder it will be for the administration to claim that the impacts of their cuts are limited.

Update on Better Broadband for Norfolk rollout

As at the end of December, coverage has reached 96%. Although the expected level of coverage has been achieved, the Better Broadband for Norfolk rollout will continue until end March 2020 as planned. I am continuing to fight for the remaining 8% of properties with no fibre solution planned. If you still haven't received any benefit from the rollout, please contact me.

Pocket Parks

Pocket Parks are a brilliant way to restore and renovate existing parks that have fallen into disrepair, as well as creating safe and usable green spaces for local communities. Grants have recently become available from a £1.35 million fund and applications are welcome from community-led organisations working in partnerships with local authorities and other local partners. For more information please contact me and I can forward you more details.

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Report from Councillor Bütikofer

December

Full Council at NNDC last met on the 17th of December 2019.

It being the last meeting before Christmas Council were joined by a North Norfolk based community music organisation which works with people with Parkinson's disease, for a short segment of Christmas music before the meeting started formally.

We were also joined by Lady Agnew the High Sheriff of Norfolk who was in attendance to present certificates to three local residents in recognition of their 'great and valuable services to the community. Earlier in the year the three ladies rescued a man who became unconscious whilst swimming at a local pool, and then administered lifesaving first aid.

Council then accepted three reports from Cabinet in relation to:
Fees and Charges for the coming year from 1 April 2020
The Treasury Management Half Yearly Report
The Medium Term Financial Strategy

The District Council has been consulted by the county Council and the Boundary Commission regarding proposed changes to the County Council Division boundaries. The Council considered two proposals and adopted one for recommendation as the Councils preferred option for submission to the boundary commission.

The Council is required by Local Government legislation to convene an Independent Remuneration Panel to consider Councillors allowances every four years. Whilst the Cabinet expressed concern about such a review in the current climate, it is a statutory requirement of the Council to undertake this review and therefore Council voted for the process to continue at this time. The panel will review current allowances and make any recommendations for consideration at a later meeting of Full Council.

There were three motions considered:

Public Fireworks Displays

Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism
Support for the Local electricity Bill and Community-Scale Renewable Energy

Councillors will have heard about the recent serious cliff fall in Trimmingham, please can they continue to help spread the message that no one should walk or play on or near the cliff edges.

January

NNDC is aware that it has not always communicated efficiently and has certainly not been seen as a listening Council by many Parish Councils in the past. In an effort to change things for the better we have struck up a working relationship with the North Norfolk parish Council forum and are planning a series of meetings over the coming year.

All Parishes should have received an invitation to attend the first event on the 22nd of January 7pm at NNDC.

Council tree planting initiative. The council scheme is to plant 110,000 trees in four years - one for every person in North Norfolk.

North Walsham has now become a Heritage Action Zone. Funding of £975K has been secured from Historic England Programme with NNDC committed to match this sum through a decision made at cabinet on 22nd November. The four year scheme will begin in April 2020 with a range of projects to restore and enhance the towns historic character, making it more attractive, engaging and vibrant place for residents and visitors.

North Norfolk has officially received £1M from Sports England towards the construction of the Splash Leisure centre in Sheringham. Funding was subject to requirements that ensure the leisure centre would be an asset to the community and promote health and well being.

The council has approved another £22,000 to community projects in Holt, North Walsham, and Stalham in the final round of funding from the Councils Market Town Initiative. Now £400K has been spent.

Still no news on Selbrigg wind turbines.

Brian Hannah, ex Sheringham North Councillor died on Wednesday December 29th. He was a key figure in Norfolk politics for more than two decades but was forced to step down in late 2019 due to poor health. He served as chair of NCC and represented Sheringham North on NNDC for 21 years.

NNDC Sporting Centre of Excellence project once again proven a track record of success, with three young members taking home gold medals in the most recent fixture - the Norfolk County Cross Country Championship.

Specialist coaching being offered at Gresham's school in Holt has already seen members excelling in their respective sports at County level.

Latest round of Big Society Awards have been agreed - including Gresham Village Hall Association - £5000 towards the replacement of new windows and doors for the village hall. Since BSF started in 2012, NNDC has awarded over £1.96M to 268 community projects in North Norfolk.

BSF will next meet in March 2020. Applications need to be submitted to the Council's Health and communities Team by Monday 4th February.

February

Splash got damaged in the storms at the weekend. Pane of roofing tile fell into the pool area. There was also damage to Tides restaurant on the pier.

The planning inspectorate decision regarding The Selbrigg and Pond turbines has decided to ALLOW to grant planning permission. Currently looking how to proceed from here and what alternatives are available.

NNDC have met with local businessmen in North Walsham to hear the concerns of those affected by the gas main works undertaken by tRIIo for Cadent Gas Limited.

North Norfolk visitor centre re-opens its doors this weekend (6th Feb) after undergoing a complete redesign to showcase the special interest of the North Norfolk Coast and provide enhanced accessible facilities for visitors to Cromer. The Visitor Centre will feature an exciting "discovery Zone" as part of the NNDC 'deep history Coast' initiative.