

## Update from County Councillor Tom FitzPatrick

### Broadband boost for Norfolk announced

Last Friday (19<sup>th</sup> March) the Government announced Norfolk will be involved in a new round of Gigabit broadband procurement of a major expansion of the fastest type of broadband, which could benefit up to a third of properties in the county. Known as Gigabit / Full Fibre / Ultrafast / Fibre to the Premise, it has a speed of 100-1000 mega-bits per second – compared to 24 or 30Mbps for superfast broadband

This phase is likely to contain all properties within Norfolk that are not expected to gain access to Gigabit capable broadband via commercially funded programmes or any other initiatives – that's estimated to be 30 – 35% of all premises. This will bring real benefits to the businesses and residents who will get this boost. Implementation would be expected to start in early 2023, which fits well with our third Better Broadband for Norfolk contract, another step in ensuring that Norfolk continues to enhance its digital capability.

- Over the past few years, Norfolk County Council and BT have been working hard to get as many homes and businesses connected to better broadband as possible.
- Norfolk is getting faster, with 94% of the county now able to access speeds of 24Mbps+
- Our goal is 100% coverage

### 12 ways to swap2save - new campaign aims to cut single use product waste

A campaign was launched yesterday (Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, to help drive down single-use product and plastic waste by calling on people to swap2save. By making small everyday changes, like swapping a take-away drink in a plastic bottle for a reusable and refillable water bottle, people will be able to save their money and cut waste.

The single-use items targeted by the campaign lead to 30,000 tonnes of waste annually in Norfolk, costing £3.47million to dispose of every year. This is a global problem and it can seem tough to know where to start to help make things better. The team behind this clever new campaign have devised ways to help us to think about some of the few small choices we make every day that cumulatively have the chance to make a really big difference. Before covid hit last year we were already trialling some new ideas at County Hall, and just by switching to reusable cups we were immediately able to cut the number of single-use cups we used from more than 110,000 a year, to almost zero.

Look out for the campaign on social media, with a new idea coming every week.

- How many swaps can you make?"

Over the coming weeks the campaign will highlight some simple swaps people can make to cut waste. Ideas include swapping disposable razors for a bamboo or stainless one with replaceable blades, switching from disposable wet wipes or cotton wool pads to a washable cotton flannel, or for a snack swapping crisps in a plastic packet for popcorn popped at home.

- For more information, and great swap ideas, visit [www.norfolkrecycles.com/swap2save](http://www.norfolkrecycles.com/swap2save)

## Covid-19 Trusted sources of information

The most recent **verified data on cases in the UK and Norfolk** is available from Public Health England [here](#) and the Norfolk Insights website [here](#).

Everyone has a key role in promoting [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) and [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) as trusted sources of information to the public. It is really important to ensure people go to the right sources of information and keep up to date with how to look after themselves.

- **Keep up to date:** We have [a dedicated webpage for coronavirus updates](#) in Norfolk and impact on Norfolk County Council services. This is updated regularly so please do re-visit this page.
- **Service updates** - The most up to date information on council services can be found at [Norfolk County Council services disruptions](#). The council will continue to monitor its services and, if regulations and circumstances change, it will review its current plans.

## Latest National Announcements

**Mental health support for children and young people** - The Government has [announced](#) £79 million funding to expand mental health services for children and young people who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak and lockdown. The new funding will support the number of mental health support teams in schools and colleges to increase from 59 to 400 by April 2023.

- Mental health support teams provide training sessions and workshops for parents and teachers. They also offer a service where children can text their local mental health support team, with a health professional responding within an hour during the school day offering them advice, and provide families with tips on spotting when children and young people are struggling with their mental health.
- Public Health England has a series of dedicated resources on the [Every Mind Matters website](#) to help children and young people, their parents and carers to manage their mental wellbeing, deal with stress and tackle issues like anxiety and uncertainty.

**Further support for commercial and residential tenants** - The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, has [announced](#) an extension to the ban on bailiff enforced evictions for residential tenants, in all but the most serious circumstances, until at least 31 May.

- The requirement for landlords to provide six-month notice periods to residential tenants before they evict will also be extended until at least 31 May. The Government has also confirmed that the ban on commercial evictions will be extended for a further three months to 30 June.

**Call for evidence to improve health and wellbeing of women in England** On 6 March, the Government [launched](#) a 12-week call for evidence to better understand women's experiences of the health and care system. All women are urged to share their experiences to form the basis of a new Women's Health Strategy.

- The consultation can be found [here](#).

Launching to coincide with International Women's Day, the call for evidence will form the basis of a government-led Women's Health Strategy, to improve the health and wellbeing of women across England and ensure health services are meeting the needs of women. People who live with and care for women, organisations with experience of providing services for women and those with an expertise in women's health are also encouraged to share their views.

## Possible return to physical meetings

The current legislation allowing meetings to be held remotely is due to expire on the 7<sup>th</sup> May. Unless it is extended, meetings may have to be held in person subject to social distancing rules.

- Guidance will be given by the Local Government Association and the Norfolk Association of Local Councils nearer the time.

## Education and School Meals

**Free school meal vouchers available during Easter holidays** - Children eligible for free school meals will be offered them during the Easter holidays thanks to Norfolk County Council. A child from a family that received benefits is eligible for a £15 voucher per week, a total of £30 for the entire break.

The one-off funding for the scheme comes from the Department of Work and Pensions' winter hardship support. Norfolk County Council has received an additional £952,000 from the fund, much of which will be used to provide free school meal vouchers during Easter.

Schools can order the food vouchers for pupils using an online service and families can receive the codes by email to redeem themselves or as a voucher provided by post, collection or delivery to families without internet access.

Some schools may also be offering food parcels, parents and carers **should contact their school office** to see what they are providing.

Children are eligible for the vouchers if their family receives one of the benefits listed below:

- Universal Credit - with an annual earned income of no more than £7,400 after tax
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for the four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit) with an annual gross income of no more than £16,190

Children in years reception to two that receive Universal infant Free School Meals are not eligible as part of the scheme; they have to be eligible for means-tested free school meals.

[This link provides more information and process to apply for free school meals.](#)

**Schools-** On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 all schools and colleges opened to all pupils with the overall attendance rate at 73% compared to an early national benchmark of 69%. Primary school attendance has been extremely positive at 97% for the first 2 days back with secondary attendance increasing from 37% on Monday to 45% on Tuesday due to the majority working to a staggered start to enable initial testing to take place.

- Testing continues to require attention, so we have provided further information to schools to highlight the actions needed for different scenarios. We have also procured Test-Register software that is being made available free of charge to Norfolk Schools, which will help schools manage onsite and home testing of staff and pupils and has the potential to reduce the test admin burden.

**Post 16's** - Our numbers show that 813 young people (4.7% of 16 and 17 year-olds) are currently NEET. The launch of the independent travel training TITAN framework is being delivered to schools, colleges and post 16 providers across the county. This will help to embed independent travel training within the curriculum from an early age. Cohorts of young people who are more at risk of becoming NEET (such as home educated or children missing education) have been sent letters offering information, advice and guidance on transition pathways and progression routes.

**Early Years** - 668 settings opened last week with 11,685 children attending. 4,191 were children of critical workers. of which 567 are vulnerable. Of those 185 have a social worker and 99 have an EHCP. We have 157 providers signed up for home testing and they will receive their next delivery of kits from tomorrow. However, DfE are sending home testing kits to all private and voluntary nurseries from tomorrow so we may see this number reduce. We have also invited childminders with assistants to now join the scheme and they were contacted last week.

## Social Care

**Call to Carers campaign has been launched** - Norfolk County Council, in partnership with the NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group and the Eastern Daily Press has launched a new campaign, Call to Carers. Call to Carers aims to identify unpaid carers who may not be registered or known to their GP practice, or to local council services.

It is also reaching out to any paid carers who have not yet been offered the Coronavirus vaccine, to ask them to get in touch.

- Between now and 31 March, there is a dedicated online form at: [apps.norfolk.gov.uk/carervax](https://apps.norfolk.gov.uk/carervax), for carers to register for a vaccine, and a 24/7 telephone voicemail service on: 01603 257 256.
- For more information on eligibility and the support that is available, click on this link: [COVID-19 vaccinations offered to unpaid carers of elderly and disabled people across Norfolk and Waveney - Norfolk and Waveney CCG.](#)

**Adult Social Care Recruitment** - February has seen the relaunch of Adult Social Care recruitment campaigns both locally and nationally to raise awareness and attract candidates to work in the sector. Over the coming months you will see various initiatives from print, radio, TV, social media, display marketing and virtual events across Norfolk and Waveney rolling out. The focus of the current campaign is to encourage applicants from other sectors which have been particularly impacted by the pandemic such as retail, hospitality and leisure to explore the opportunities available across Adult Social Care by visiting the Norfolk Care Careers website [www.norfolkcarecareers.co.uk](http://www.norfolkcarecareers.co.uk).

The Norfolk Care Careers Website is a free recruitment platform for all providers of Adult Social Care to advertise their vacancies and a one-stop-shop for candidates looking for jobs and advice and guidance about working in the sector.

**Supported Housing Accommodation** - Norfolk County Council will be working with partner organisations over the next three years to develop more supported housing for people with learning disabilities, mental health needs, autism and physical disabilities. At the Cabinet meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> March the Council agreed to invest in future housing developments to make sure we get the right type of properties in the right place.

To support this work the County Council are inviting people and families to attend a webinar to talk about our plans and to help shape what the homes should look and feel like. The feedback from these sessions will be used to improve and develop our draft design guide. This is the guide that will be used to describe how all of the new homes should be built. The invitation will be shared with our networks of providers and partners and with people who use our services.

## Business and the Economy

- ✓ **Norfolk Rural Strategy 2021-24.** There is a refresh of the Norfolk Rural Strategy, which aims to address the challenges and opportunities Rural Norfolk faces today, being carried out. The draft strategy can be found [here](#).
- ✓ **Support for businesses** - Webinars and videos about trading with the EU are available for councils to share with local stakeholders and businesses. Business travel and mutual recognition of qualifications are both topics explained in the new on demand videos which focus on priority topics for businesses. Businesses can [register here](#) to immediately access the video content.
- ✓ A [step-by-step guide](#) on how to navigate the new rules on business travel to the EU has also been made available for businesses.

Businesses can also use the [Checker tool on GOV.UK](#), which will provide a personalised list of the most up to date actions that businesses need to take.

## Fire Service Recruitment

- **Fire Service recruitment - Could you be our next on-call firefighter?**

Norfolk F&RS has received extensive media coverage over the past couple of weeks around the County Council campaign to recruit more on-call firefighters across Norfolk.

- ✓ Our communities rely on on-call stations, and those staffing them are their own town/village residents, combining a career with us alongside their primary employment.
- ✓ We currently have more than 35 vacancies across Norfolk and need everyone's support to help us fill these.
- If **you** know someone who could be our next on-call firefighter, all the details are on our website [www.norfolk.gov.uk/fire](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/fire)

### **Tom FitzPatrick**

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