

County Councillor's report

April 2024

Verge cutting

We've moved from the time of year where the County Council makes people unhappy with the way it manages flood water to the time of year where it makes people unhappy with the way it manages verges and hedges. So, I thought it would be a good moment to circulate this which sets out the Council's policy on cutting:

[Trees, hedges and grass verges - Norfolk County Council](#)

(if you are reading a printed version and don't have the url, searching 'Norfolk County Council verges' online will take you there.)

Walking and cycling

You might have seen media reports that the County Council is receiving government funds to improve some walking and cycling routes. Over the years I have tried to persuade the Council to look at upgrading parts of the Paston Way to make it easier for cyclists and pushchairs to use without a lot of success so far. Spurred on by this latest news I will try again.

Council budget: Apple to the rescue?

You might also have seen that Apple has agreed to pay out around £400 million in a legal case. Surprisingly we have not had an official statement of what this means for the council's coffers but I expect it will come up at the council meeting on 26th March. As far as I can work out the money will go into the Council's Pension Fund so it won't directly benefit the rest of us.

At the Council's budget-setting meeting, I said that the Council needs to focus on how it delivers services because we are reaching the point where it spends vast amounts of money with people increasingly feeling that they have very little to show for it. Things may change when we have a directly elected council leader next May but County Hall to me seems increasingly detached from the lives of people living across the County.

This is the summary of the changes in the budget that was agreed:

- £52.2 million of new savings, including £12.1 million from 'transformation programmes'.
- A proposed 4.99 per cent increase in the county council's share of Council Tax, in line with the Government's capping level (2.99 per cent for general Council Tax and 2 per cent for adult social care). This would increase the council's share of band D bills to £1,672.11. A 4.99 per cent rise would generate £24.9 million.

A small number of the budget proposals (cuts of £1.4m) have been identified as potentially requiring public consultation, as they may relate to a policy or service change. These include:

- Charging an admin fee for brokering on behalf of people who self-fund their adult social care
- Review of the adult social care non-residential charging policy – including the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG)
- Recommissioning of social isolation and loneliness contracts
- Norfolk Record Office – pre-booking of visits and new paid services to increase income generation
- Switching off 2% of streetlights
- Recycling centres: Reduction of opening hours at some recycling centres to deliver a more consistent approach, in line with neighbouring authorities

Norwich Works exhibition

One of the greatest pleasures of being a County Councillor (second only to attending Parish Council meetings of course!) is being a member of the Museums Committee. I rarely get the chance to promote the Museums' Service in these reports so I just want to say, if you can make it along to the Norwich Works exhibition at the Castle before it closes, I really would recommend it.

[Norwich Works: The Industrial Photography of Walter and Rita Nurnberg - Norfolk Museums](#)

Anyone who can remember the smell of the chocolate factory will love it but it is a fantastic photographic record of the city's industrial past.

It closes on 14th April so do take a look soon.

Ed Maxfield