

County Councillors Report December 2023

Devolution Deal for Norfolk:

On Monday 4th December the NCC cabinet discussed the proposed devolution deal for Norfolk. After discussion the cabinet agreed to recommend to full Council that the deal for Norfolk should go ahead with an election for a directly elected leader to be held in May 2025. It was previously proposed that the leader's election should take place in May 2024.

The election for the new directly elected leader will require a change of governance arrangements detailed in NCC's constitution. To enable those changes to take effect in time for May 2025 Council will vote in July 2024 on the new constitution.

In May 2025 there is also an election for all 84 members of the Council, this election will be fought on new division boundaries which have been drawn after a review by the Boundary Commission for England.

Norwich Western Link (NWL)

The cabinet meeting on the 4th December also considered the progress of the project towards the submission of a planning application and the cost associated with the planning and construction.

Planning application documents for the NWL have been under development for several months. Subject to the necessary internal approvals being given, the council would intend to submit the planning application early next year.

The revised budget for the project is now £273.9m, an increase of £22.8m from the previous budget agreed in July 2022, which could increase the local contribution towards the project by £22.9m. However, the Department for Transport (DfT) have indicated that they could provide funding of up to 100% of the costs set out at OBC stage, which stood at £251.1m. If the government provided £251.1m of funding, the local contribution required towards the overall cost of the project would be less than previously anticipated even with the overall budget increase.

Discussions with the DfT around their increased contributions are expected to take place in the coming weeks and months. In the meantime, DfT have already committed to providing £24m from their contribution to the County Council, which is funding the development of the project.

Members of the County Council's approved various recommendations linked to the Norwich Western Link's planning application, Side Roads Order and Compulsory Purchase Order when they met on Monday 4 December. They have also recommended the increased budget and local contribution for approval by Full Council, when it meets in January 2024.

Winter Maintenance:

The winter maintenance operation (gritting) is now in full swing brought on by the recent cold weather.

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. To maintain the efficiency of the operation NCC have purchased 27 new gritting machines at accost of £3m+ to replace older machines. The A11 and A47 are gritted by National Highways.

In addition to the 49 gritting routes, several 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.

Norfolk spends an average of £3.2m each year keeping highways moving over the winter. The average cost of each full gritting run is around £49,000. Approximately 15,000 tonnes of salt is held in salt barns across the county, which will be restocked regularly throughout the winter season through a unique PFI contract.

Your Norfolk:

NCC's Your Norfolk magazine has just landed on doorsteps. Residents should be encouraged to keep their copy available as it is full of useful information and contact details to help cope with the problems that winter brings.

This edition is printed on recycled paper which is capable of further recycling.

Mark Kiddle-Morris, Norfolk County Council,
Member for Necton & Launditch.

5th December 2023.