September and October - Priory Parish Council Report

Please find attached my report for the above period.

As always, if you believe I can be of help or assistance as your District Councillor please do get in touch.

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Sarah

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

Local government reorganisation (LGR)

Well, a week is a long time in Politics, and this month has come with some very big and unexpected changes.

You will probably be aware that in September the Government announced it was reviewing its decisions on LGR. Please note it has said it is reviewing, not that is not happening as has been quoted in some media. How long this review will take, what will fall within its scope and when we will hear the result we have not been told. Having already been through several iterations of discussions about local government reform in my time as a Councillor, I very much doubt it will not be back in some form: but this was certainly the round that got the furthest.

I am appalled by the current turn of events. Whilst I have never made any secret of my belief that LGR in what was its proposed form was wrong and would do nothing to improve the representation of local residents; wasting taxpayers money when so many are struggling on a daily basis is truly unforgivable. To date the proposed changes have cost North Norfolk £600,000 We have already written to Central Government asking for the return of taxpayers money wasted at their insistence.

So, what does this mean for North Norfolk District Council?

- Starting straight away we will work with local partners to scale back and stop current LGR work.
- We will wait to hear what the Government has to say regarding the progress of their LGR review, and as and when appropriate work with local partners in submitting any response to the review.
- We will look to work with local partners and Government to understand what a devolution deal and establishment of a Strategic Authority for Norfolk (and Suffolk) might mean for our communities, residents and businesses in

supporting local growth in a fair and equitable way, given the advantages already being conferred on areas with established Strategic Authorities and elected mayoral structures.

- District Council elections will now go ahead on the 6th of May 2027.

As always when we have more news I will of course update you.

Councillor Community Grant Fund

A reminder that the Councillor Community Grant Fund is now active. The fund is intended to enable each elected Councillor to support small-scale projects and initiatives within their ward that provide direct benefit to the local community. The Fund is designed to support community wellbeing, strengthen local engagement, and address local priorities identified by ward Councillors. The Fund does not replace core council service delivery or statutory responsibilities.

We all have a funding allocation of £4,000 for the financial year, as outlined in the NNDC budget and agreed by Full Council. The minimum value of any grant award supported from a councillor's allocation is £250. Where an individual award exceeds £1,000, the proposed expenditure must demonstrate a clear benefit to the wider ward/community (i.e., it should be accessible to, or deliver value for, a broad range of residents). Awards between £250 and £1,000 may support more localised initiatives, provided they still meet the eligibility criteria and deliver a clear community benefit. Allocations are nontransferable between councillors and cannot be pooled unless expressly approved as part of a jointly sponsored ward project to accommodate projects that impact across ward boundaries.

I would like to try and assist as many projects as possible, so please contact me so we can discuss your ideas and proposals. Full details are included within the link below. In the first instance please send me a couple of lines introducing yourself and your project and contact details and I will arrange a time for us to speak and see how we can progress the idea.

I look forward to hearing from you.

ASK FOR ANNIE

What is Ask for Annie?

Ask for Annie is a discreet domestic abuse support scheme used across North Norfolk District Council. It provides a simple, recognised way for members of the public, colleagues, or elected members to signal that they need help, without having to explain their situation in a public or unsafe setting.

When someone asks for Annie, for example, "*Is Annie available*?", this acts as an agreed trigger that domestic abuse support may be needed. Trained staff then follow the Ask for Annie process to make sure the person is supported safely, respectfully and confidentially.

Why are we using Ask for Annie?

Domestic abuse can affect anyone. People experiencing abuse may find it difficult or unsafe to ask for help directly.

Ask for Annie:

- removes barriers to disclosure
- allows people to ask for help discreetly
- creates a consistent and safe response across services
- makes sure staff know how to respond appropriately and sensitively

The scheme supports our commitment to safeguarding, wellbeing and trauma-informed practice.

Who does Ask for Annie apply to?

Ask for Annie can be used by: anyone and all officers and members of the Council stand ready to support a request.

It may be used:

- in Council offices
- during telephone conversations
- while working in the community or on site

Who is involved in responding?

The Ask for Annie scheme is supported by trained colleagues across the Council, including:

- Customer Services
- Housing Options
- Domestic Abuse Champions

- Visiting officers and members

Fly Tipping

You may have seen in the media that Cabinet voted unanimously to increase fly tipping fines from £80 to £500. With central government planning to increase the level of penalties that may be charged further it is likely this will rise further in the future. Last year over 430 cases were investigated, and 5 cases resulted in prosecutions – there are other steps in the process before we ultimately prosecute, so it doesn't mean the other cases did not result in further action being taken.

Norfolk and Norwich Arts Festival for a grant for Arts projects for primary schools

I am encouraging them to get more of their money spent in North Norfolk. Cromer and Sheringham and Kelling are already involved. Your help would be much appreciated.

https://nnfestival.org.uk/schools-and-communities/creative-schools/

Eligible households reminded to get £150 off energy bills this winter

The government has reminded eligible households they could receive £150 off their energy bills this winter through the Warm Home Discount if they receive qualifying means-tested benefits.

The government is encouraging anyone who may qualify to check that they are named on their electricity bill by 23 August, as suppliers will use customer records from that date to determine eligibility.

In England and Wales, this includes households in receipt of:

- Housing Benefit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit

Having the eligible person named on their electricity bill will help make sure households receive the discount automatically.

Cromer Pier

The contract for the company who manage Cromer Pier for the Council has been extended ensuring the ongoing smooth running of the events we all know and love. Like other historic and award-winning attractions in the district it requires a huge amount of day-to-day organisation and planning to keep it up to the standards our residents and visitors expect. You will have seen in other recent reports that an upgrade to the auditorium is scheduled for next year.

North Lodge Park

For many years there have been discussions about the use of elements of North Lodge Park in Cromer that are not used and are no longer fit for the purpose they were originally designed for. The Council is currently considering plans to build a carpark on some of the site to help generate greater footfall at that side of the town. It will of obviously also create much needed additional capacity.

As always if I can be of help or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Cllr Sarah Butikofer

Sarah Butikofer

North Norfolk District Councillor for Priory Ward

Chairman of the Governance Risk and Audit Committee

Liberal Democrat Regional Peer for the LGA

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