Annual Parish Council Meeting Report – James Easter

April 2023

The Council has made big strides in the last year helping the District address a whole variety of challenges including the recovery from Covid, the cost of energy and general cost of living , the impact of Ukrainian Refugees on top of previous schemes from Hong Kong, Afghanistan, Syria and immigration across the channel.

But as we look to the future our ambition never been greater, our drive more intense or our financial strength so great.

Since 2007 council tax in South Norfolk has increased by a quarter LESS than inflation. So, for the last sixteen years our tax rise has been in aggregate 25% less than the ONS's RPI inflation measure. This year we have approved a capital budget of £113m, whilst freezing council tax for a ninth time. Ours is a balanced, affordable budget that does not draw from reserves.

There have been no cuts. No, we're doing more, much more. And doing it for less. for every family, in every street and place in our district

This year we're committing an extra £1.3million pounds for those in need so we can continue to help 500 households a month address the cost of living and the challenges life sends.

Our day to day work covers 86 different activities and includes

- Keeping people fit and healthy with new country parks in Costessey (Queens Hill) & Cringleford (Yare valley) whilst renewing our commitment to our heritage landscape at Venta Icenorum in the Landscape Protection Zone.
- Generating 50% of our council tax income again from trading activities – building homes including our share of the affordable homes that are so important and have meant that every home lost to the right to buy has been replaced.
- Providing commercial space for business to prosper & expand
- Teaching 3000 kids to swim each year in our swimming pools that will now be heated by renewable energy sources

We hope that we are trusted to deliver the best possible quality of life

- Trusted by residents –who know that during covid every bin collected, every fridge filled
- By business – who appreciated over £1m per week distributed in lockdown with targeted schemes that filled the gaps the national programs missed
- By government – Our capital program includes £30m in grants to make a bigger economy and a brighter future for our 140,000 residents in 60000 homes.

Here in the Bressingham and Burston Ward, we have delivered a number of local schemes and supported local volunteers in Burston, Tibenham, Shelfanger, Bresingham and Fersfield.

Last year Full Council authorised us to borrow £20m over 20 years at fixed rates in the low 2's. That was the deal of the century. It's allowed us to commit to this budget at the lowest possible landed cost. We are set up to make the really important and far-sighted generational investments which will pay dividends for residents for years to come.

So, we're building and enhancing some of the successes from the last 16 years

- Norwich Science is a world leader in genetics and genomics. We did that 16 years on from an initial £250k grant to buy experimental; sequencers. Now we have £8m in the capital program to develop the future at the science park – proper jobs addressing the grand challenges of tomorrow

- South Norfolk has been growing at 1pc per year for 50 years. But publications like the Sunday Times rank us as one of the best places to live in the country. That's because quality of life is so good. We have matched housing growth with infrastructure investment. Harleston - £1m town centre improvements. Do the same again in Wymondham with the Town Council pooling their CIL. Working on the station
- A local plan that puts roofs over people's heads (Circa 50,000k new homes across Greater Norwich) whilst protecting our environment including some of the unsung work renewing our work on conservation area reviews and supporting neighbourhood planning.

We have a responsibility to tread more lightly on our shared environment. We are already the most energy efficient having saved more carbon than any other – 700 tonnes since we began measuring our carbon footprint.

We will be moving to our new low carbon building which has over 2,500 solar panels and will use 84% less energy than we have had before not only this we are going all the way by installing air source heat pumps.

It's the right thing for the world. And we recognise there has never been a more important moment to share the structurally lower cost base that arises, passed on as a dividend to residents as a council tax freeze.

Our job is to help everyone to go green and have committed to EV Charging points for everyone village that wants one, the biggest brains at the UEA that call South Norfolk home and the global leadership in fuel-efficiency, lightweight structures at Lotus.

It's not just a green environment. It's a healthy one too
- Keeping people fit and healthy – investing over £2m in the Diss Swimming Pool with air source heating and actively pursuing other opportunities in Diss.
- A £1m investment in Tennis Courts at Wymondham with Sport England adding to3G pitches in Long Stratton & Wymondham.

Other local schemes including working with others
- The Long Stratton bypass has completed all the regulatory steps
- Easton Village Hall, needs us to do it but helping the Parish to do more with our co-investment fund
- Our voluntary groups 400 grants in 4 years including 40 larger CAF fund grants
- £1m invested to improve Harleston Town Centre and a similar £1m scheme to improve Wymondham next year
- Working with the doctors, NHS & CCG to deliver a new surgery for Hethersett
- Our pivotal role in District Direct that places our staff in the hospital so we can prepare recovering patients for timely discharge to an adapted home
- Working to welcome and sustain over 200 Ukrainian guests. We have built the financial strength and capacity to deal with the unexpected shocks without missing a beat.

We are proud that we have built a team that
- Puts South Norfolk First
- The Strongest foundations to deliver the important things that residents and business value the most
- The ambition to build a bigger green economy that everyone can be proud of