

County Council Report November 2022– Judy Oliver

Avian flu update

Further cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 have been confirmed in Norfolk. The latest was confirmed in commercial poultry on 29 October at premises near Attleborough.

People who keep poultry and encourage are being encouraged to register with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) poultry register. People with 50 or more birds are legally required to register but others can choose to register voluntarily. By doing so people will be kept informed on the latest bird flu information so they can take action to reduce the risk to their birds, which in turn reduces the risk to all UK poultry.

Mandatory housing measures for all poultry and captive birds are being introduced to all areas of England from Monday 7 November, following a decision by the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer. The order will extend the mandatory housing measures already in force in Norfolk to the whole of England following an increase in the national risk of bird flu in wild birds to very high.

Advice for the public

The UK Health Security Agency has said that avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds and the risk to the general public's health is very low.

The Food Standards Agency has said that avian influenza poses a very low food safety risk, and that properly cooked poultry and poultry products, such as eggs, are safe to eat.

The public are advised to keep to designated footpaths, not to feed wild birds, and keep dogs on leads. Please do not touch sick or dead birds, their feathers, or their droppings. If you see a dead bird, please report it to Defra's helpline on 03459 335577. Sick birds should be reported to the RSPCA (0300 1234 999) who may be able to help.

Government deadline for council tax rebate extended

The Government has extended the deadline for claiming a £150 cost of living rebate on Council Tax, as whilst 99% of households have received the rebate, nearly 200,000 households had missed out on the payment.

The extension is thought to help councils support the hardest to reach households such as those that moved and did not provide any payment information.

Eligible households have until 30 November to claim the £150 payment, which does not have to be paid back.

Anyone who is yet to receive their rebate is urged to check with NNDC for more information and make a claim.

Norfolk Libraries

'Warm Welcome' is a national campaign which will work with communities, including churches and faith groups, businesses, and local authorities, to ensure that nobody is left to suffer on their own this winter.

Norfolk Libraries Service will be making all 47 of its libraries available as part of the Warm Welcome campaign.

Libraries across Norfolk will remain open for all and provide a place for people to sit in comfort and access a variety of services, including reading, jigsaws, board games, or joining in 'Just a Cuppa' or activities.

'Warm and Well' bags

Until the end of March 2023, Norfolk libraries will be offering free bags of essential items. The 'Warm and Well' bags contain a scarf, hat, gloves, blanket, socks and a hot water bottle. Adult and child bags are available.

Tea, coffee, instant soup, and hot chocolate are also available during staffed hours.

Health and well-being

In July 2022 Norfolk Public Health announced their new 'Ready to Change' online tool to help people improve their health. Developed with Behaviour Change specialists from the University of East Anglia, the platform contains lots of interactive tools and step-by-step guides that will help people make changes to their health, such as losing weight and eating healthily, moving more, drinking less and quitting smoking.

On 1 November Public Health launched Ready to Change.

Two well-known TV GPs: Dr Hilary Jones from GMTV, and Dr Zoe Williams from ITV This Morning, who will be supporting Ready to Change over the next two months.

Covid boosters

More than 100,000 autumn COVID-19 vaccination boosters have been administered to people across Norfolk and Waveney so far.

The NHS will contact people when it is their turn to book in for the vaccine and are urging those invited for both a flu and COVID-19 booster vaccine to take up the offer as quickly as possible.

Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance

The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance is a taskforce, brought together in early 2021, to work so that Norfolk communities and infrastructure are safer and more resilient to the risks of inland and coastal flooding. The Alliance includes, among others, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the Association of Drainage Authorities, the Water Management Alliance, Water Resources East, the Norfolk Resilience Forum, the Broads Authority and Norfolk's County, Borough, City, District and Parish Councils.

Flooding is a real threat in Norfolk through the winter and keeping even the smallest watercourses clear and flowing freely will help protect homes and businesses safe.

By checking the drains and ditches on their own property, residents can take action to mitigate the effects of flooding on their home.

To keep your property, and those around you, safe from flooding, property owners must check ditches and watercourses on or adjacent to their land and keep them clear. Even smaller watercourses which may be dry for most of the year, play a key drainage role in wet weather.

For drains in public places and along Norfolk's highways, the County Council's Highways Team work to clear them and keep roads open. Please report any blocked or broken drains on Norfolk's highways that you see.

UK Commission on Covid Commemoration

The UK Commission on Covid Commemoration has launched a consultation giving people the opportunity to say how they think the pandemic should be remembered and with possible suggestions including the adoption of a Remembrance Sunday-style symbol, dedicated memorials and reflective spaces.

The Commission is also seeking suggestions on suitable dates to hold a national day of remembrance and views on how future generations should be educated about the sacrifices made throughout the pandemic, as well as marking key achievements such as the development of the vaccines and the valuable contribution made by volunteers.

The public consultation will close on 5 December 2022.

The Commission will report its recommendations to the Prime Minister by the end of March 2023.

Norfolk County Council Budget Consultation

As in previous years the council will be consulting Norfolk residents and stakeholders on council tax and budget proposals as part of the budget setting process.

Norfolk County Council will set a new budget on 21st February 2023. Ahead of this, they will be asking for views on the proposed council tax level for 2023-24, including a proposal for the adult social care precept. As a part of this work, they will also be consulting on a number of changes to services to contribute to our reduction in spending as a council.

Residents can have their say at www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget and paper copies of the consultation can be requested via email at haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk

The consultation started on 21 October and will end 16 December 2022. Findings will be considered by the Cabinet on 30 January, before the full council finalises the budget on 21 February 2023.

National Adoption Week

National Adoption Week took place 17-23 October. Norfolk County Council's Adoption Service is inviting more people to consider adoption.

People from all sorts of different backgrounds, occupations and walks of life can make good adopters. The service does not discriminate on the grounds of gender, sexuality or disability and need adopters for children of all ages. They are particularly looking for adopters for brothers and sisters, toddlers and young children aged four and older, and for children with disabilities.