

MISSED BIN COLLECTIONS

Thankfully, the number of missed collections has reduced significantly over the last month. The Council continues to monitor the performance daily and we are intent on eliminating missed bins. The teams are required to start at 7am on collection days and a recent incident of a 6am call has been reported. Please let me know if you experience any further problems with the service delivered by Serco on behalf of the Council via my Council email address : andrew.brown@north-norfolk.gov.uk and I will have them investigated.

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL FORUM

On 9th January, the Forum met to discuss the development of warm spaces, arrangements for the local elections requiring voter ID, issue of allowances for town councillors, the purdah period restricting member publicity will start on 21 March and councillors elected on 4 May will take office on 8 May after the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. The register of interest for elected councillors will become digital in future. The challenge presented by voter ID was discussed. The Council will publish key dates in the election process and the Electoral Commission website will also provide further information.

NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY

We expect to be passing delayed applications for new build development in late February, early March following the Government in March last year imposing an embargo on our planning department. The requirement to satisfy the Habitats Regulations which limit nitrate and phosphate discharges into our natural watercourses is being addressed. Most Councils in Norfolk are affected and to resolve the problem we have invested in land which will be offered to developers to buy credits and create mitigation measures to manage pollution more effectively.

PLANNING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The public consultation on aspects of how the delivery of the planning service by the Council has now closed. The responses are being assessed but some issues are clear such as easier access to advice, more reporting on progress and a better designed website. More will be announced shortly.

SECTION 106 PLANNING RECEIPTS

Following the upgrade of the planning website with new software two years ago we can now offer online access to track how much is received and on which matters and in which areas the funds can be invested. Section 106 funds are used to increase affordable housing, create more school places and funding for public realm schemes without which development applications would be refused. Use the words "Section 106 planning obligations" in the search field of the NNDC Home Page and you can access by using area or type of funding.

AFFORDABLE HOMES PROVISION

One key objective of this Councils delivery plan was to increase local housing for local need. I am pleased to report that the Council is placed in the top 5 councils nationally for delivering affordable homes in the last municipal year. We are determined to improve our plans to deliver much more affordable housing if this administration is to retain control after the May elections.

TREE PLANTING PROMISE

Its pleasing to report that 90,000 trees have been planted since the start of this Council in 2019. The promise was to plant one for every resident in the district numbering 110,000 during this 4-year term. By the end of May we expect the number to reach the target because several landowners have committed to plant enough to enable our target to be delivered.

ELECTIONS AND CALL FOR VOTER IDENTIFICATION DELAY

The Elections Act 2022 passed through Parliament recently. A completely unnecessary interference with the voting process by the Government will require production of photo identification at polling stations starting next May. Of the 1556 allegations of voter fraud nationwide between 2017-22 just 2 resulted in prosecutions. The independent Electoral Commission have called for the new rules to be delayed because there is insufficient time, given local elections are only 4 months away, to train staff about the new requirements and to manage the public's reaction.

GLAVEN VALLEY RURAL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The consultation on the conservation appraisal affecting the rural landscape in the Glaven Valley is ongoing until 20 January. This will enable planning officers to rule whether development affects heritage assets, like listed buildings or heritage landscapes. For more information enter Glaven Valley Conservation Area Review in the Council Home Page search field. Public concern about the inadequate notice of the launch last November is being reviewed and I will be recommending a second public consultation to enable more people to respond over a longer period.