

A FEW THOUGHTS FOR JULY PCs

1. A new Community Project Fund of £500k was agreed for this year's budget and it just about ready to see the light of day. Parish Councils and community groups etc can apply but the application has to be submitted by the Borough Councillor. More details any time soon.
2. Our small grants funds, for local groups and causes to apply, has just opened. Please promote via your Council Letter or Village magazine, f/b etc. Small revenue grants up to £2.5k – total pot £15k, Capital grants up to £10k to cover 50% funding – total £50K, plus a new scheme ringfenced for rural and coastal communities – total £50k. Application details on Borough web site or that of. Norfolk Community Foundation.
3. Council had an interesting debate, following a Motion from Reform Councillor Moore, seeking to replace our Declaration, in 2021, of a climate emergency, with a practical environmental programmes for protecting residents against flooding, cost of living and such like. I think many people understand the basis of such an argument as, for example, the UK carbon footprint is only a small percentage of the global equation. However, it is a hearts and minds matter and although the banner headline is to reduce the Council's carbon emissions to zero by 2035, our planned actions for 2026 -2028 (if people would only read them before offering opinions) are very pragmatic. Although £1.2m was allocated to our net zero Declaration, we have spent only half since 2021 with nearly all of our programmes being funded by central Government.

Furthermore, the cost of living is squarely out of our control, with the Government capping our Council Tax and dictating the amount of Business Rates we are allocating. Our fees and charges revenues now represent nearly 70% of our funding and we cannot ignore that 44% of our Council Tax returns are levied by Internal Drainage Boards. We are still lobbying the Government to change this iniquitous charge on our residents which is one reason why we are incentivised to be ever more efficient to help those in need within our Borough. As regards other flood protection – this in the hands of the DEFRA but we do earmark reserves to deal with emergency matters from Wolverton Creek to around Hunstanton. As for recent work on Hunstanton promenade.

It was an interesting debate and the Motion was roundly lost.

Members of the public also took part.

4. There is a Norfolk Groundwater Challenge Meeting on 13 July (14.00 – 15.00) led by Anglia Water. The Creakes are on the Agenda. IF you haven't received an invite, by Teams or similar, I assume, my contact is Rhiannon McKenzie. Mobile 07977 853471, Flood Partnership Coordinator.
5. The Local Plan consultation is underway. The role of Borough Councillors is still unclear, at least to me. Through our Local Government Special Interest Group (Drainage and Flood Resilience Group) we are trying to ensure that future development planning takes due account of flooding issues.
6. The Council has produced an Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2028 mainly reinforcing projects already underway or to be started. This will help with securing grants and maintain our direction during the throes of Local Government Reorganisation. There is much bluster about this programme but at present, no sign that the Government is changing its plans; although the objections from Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils may delay legislation but not the implementation. Underneath this surface protestation, our officer teams are working on understanding each administrations data systems and the best routes for integration assuming the starting gun will fire but with less time to implement.

That's all for now folks.