**Councillor Eric Vardy**

**County Councillor for Holt**

**Report for November Gresham Parish Council Meeting**

**Economy**

**Chances Project**

Chances, a £4.9m Norfolk County Council project, co-funded by the European Social Fund, is reaching out to people in Norfolk who have recently lost their jobs or are long-term unemployed who may face barriers to finding work. It aims to help them get back into employment through new opportunities for support and training.

Launched in April 2021, the project has already supported nearly 300 participants on their journey to find employment.   
The Norfolk County Council-led Chances for Work and Chances Healthy Living projects are being run by partners Voluntary Norfolk, Citizens Advice Norfolk, Citizens Advice Diss, Thetford and District, and Future Projects. There are local advocates based in each of the seven Norfolk district areas, who work to provide personalised one-to-one support.

Depending on the needs of the individual, the support could include help to identify skills gaps and finding suitable training and qualifications, support to access services to boost health and wellbeing, or finding ways to overcome barriers such as transport or accessing childcare. Support for those with physical or learning disabilities could also include providing help to access services, or assistance from a mental health specialist or disability support specialist who will be working closely with the Chances team.

The project which officially started in April 2021 will run until September 2023.  
  
Individuals who are keen to find out more are welcome to contact the project team directly – for contact details and further information see [**www.norfolk.gov.uk/chances**](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding/european-funding/eu-programmes/business-growth-innovation-and-skills/chances)

**Support for Norfolk Entrepreneurs**

The Business & IP Centre Norfolk, managed by Norfolk County Council’s Library and Information Service, is offering a free six-week online programme that will take budding business owners on a journey from ‘Bedroom to Business’.

Over the past 18 months, many people have had to find alternative sources of income, including considering setting up their own business. This programme will help aspiring business owners develop their idea and provide the tools needed to get started.

Bedroom to Business is being delivered by MENTA Business Support and consists of six two-hour workshops with a chance for questions and one-to-one coaching sessions after each workshop.  
  
Starting on Friday 5 November, the six workshops will run weekly and cover topics including: pros and cons of being self-employed; identifying any additional skills needed; developing a business plan; business funding; registering your business.  
  
Workshops will be limited to a maximum of 10 people to allow participants to get the most out of the sessions. If anyone is unable to attend this programme, Bedroom to Business will run again starting in January.  
  
Participants will need to live, work or study in Norfolk or close to a Norfolk library to be eligible for this programme.  
  
For more information and to register, visit [**Bedroom to Business**](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bedroom-to-business-are-you-ready-to-start-your-own-business-registration-192184738727) or [**www.bipcnorfolk.eventbrite.com**](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/business-amp-ip-centre-norfolk-7488538381).