# January 2023

# County Councillor Eric Vardy report

Hello Councillors

I would like to start my report by wishing you all a Happy New Year. 2022 was a very challenging year to say the least. There are so many issues ongoing that impacts on us all so please if you know of a neighbour, friend or relative in need, remember there is help out there for them,

North Norfolk District Council offers help and advise of a whole raft of topics tele

01223 849782 Norfolk County Council contact number 0344 800 8020 for help with living costs and more.

# First learners complete courses as County Council given £4.7m to improve numeracy

The Department for Education have awarded Norfolk County Council £4.7 million of funding as part of the Multiply project, which aims to improve numeracy skills in adults.

The funding will last until the end of March 2025 and will be used to give grants to major training providers, such as Norfolk Adult Learning and colleges, as well as smaller organisations and grassroots providers. This grant-based approach means a larger number of people can take a course which is relevant to the skills they need.

The importance of numeracy skills shouldn’t be underestimated, and it’s already made a difference to some of the first learners to complete a course funded by the project.

An example of some of the courses that will be available are:

* Introductory courses which help increase people’s confidence with numbers
* Courses designed to help people understand and manage their money, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis
* Specific workplace courses, delivered with employers to provide skills relevant to the workplace
* Numeracy courses aimed at parents who want to increase their own skills to be able to better help their children
* Additional maths modules built in to existing vocational courses
* Intensive and flexible courses which lead to a Functional Skills Qualification

For more information, to see available courses, and to sign up and register your interest, please visit [www.norfolk.gov.uk/multiply](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/multiply).

# Norfolk Fire Service take the lead in adopting electric emergency response cars

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service have become the first fire service in the country to move to a fleet of electric emergency response cars.

Following the end of the lease period on the previous emergency response cars operated by the service, the decision has been made to move to hybrid electric vehicles. The vehicles allow incident commanders to travel swiftly to take command of, or offer support to, ongoing incidents.

Forty-five Hyundai Tucson plug-in hybrid electric vehicles are being leased for incident commanders as part of new fleet strategy and transformation programme, which will contribute to the Councils’ ambition to reduce carbon emissions by 2030.  Each car will be fitted with blue lights and communications equipment and will provide a versatile car for incident commanders to attend emergencies.

Norfolk County Council has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions across the County Council estate by 2030.

NFRS is confident that the Hyundai Tucson will meet all the requirements of an emergency response car including a large boot for equipment and the ability to respond in all weathers and on rough terrain such as farm tracks and other off-road locations.

The Hyundais will replace the previous emergency response cars used by NFRS, which were powered by diesel.

Leasing is considered to be the most cost-effective way of acquiring the vehicles for a number of reasons, including long term maintenance costs associated with any vehicle put through the kind of use emergency response cars are expected to endure.

Electric vehicle charge points are currently being installed on nominated fire stations across Norfolk, with the first cars of this order due to arrive in the spring.

# Norfolk residents set to benefit from £2 bus fare cap

Nine bus operators in Norfolk have announced that they will be taking part in the Bus Fare Cap Grant scheme.

This means that a single journey on all services run by these operators between 1 January – 31 March 2023 will cost no more than £2 thanks to funding from HM Government.

The scheme is part of the Government's Help for Households campaign designed to support families through cost-of-living pressures.

Operators taking part are:

* BorderBus
* First
* Konectbus
* Our Bus
* Sanders
* Simonds
* Coach Services
* Stagecoach
* Semens

When many are struggling with the rising cost of living, this is a welcome investment to help bring down travel costs for many. All the local operators already offer really good value fares, particularly for multiple trips or group tickets - but this offer will benefit those residents who may only use the bus occasionally or for those who want to try using the bus for the first time. Schemes like this complement work in improving bus services across Norfolk and support ambitions to get more people using public transport more often

The Department for Transport announced in September plans to invest up to £60 million to introduce the £2 bus fare cap on a single bus ticket on most services in England

The scheme set to take two million car journeys off the road, it’s fantastic to see so many bus operators signing up to the fare cap, helping people to ‘Get Around for £2’ between the 1st January and 31st March.