

Norfolk has a sizeable armed forces community with serving personal and their families stationed at RAF Marham and Swanton Morely Barracks and reservists living across the county. There is also a large veteran population of approximately 90,000 people and their families. The Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board's Strategy and Action Plan 2019/22 helps us to focus on ensuring that Norfolk's armed forces community has fair access to all local services. At the recent NCC Cabinet meeting it was agreed to establish a Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Wellbeing Fund ; a grants programme of up to £60K over two years to fund projects to improve mental health and reduce social isolation in the armed forces community.

Also at this cabinet meeting it was agreed to submit the Outline Business Case to the department for transport and to appoint the contractor to design and build the Norwich Western Link (NWL) road. This new road will link the A47 to the Broadland Northway making it much easier to access the northern parts of Norwich from the south and west of the county. This new road will significantly reduce journey times for vehicles travelling north-south or south-north to the west of Norwich, with some journey times more than halving. It will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions from vehicles, when compared to vehicles using the local road network over the 60 year appraisal period without the NWL. It will improve road safety, with 515 fewer accidents involving a motor vehicle over 60 years, an average of nine accidents a year. It will support Norfolk's economy and local businesses by creating: £313 million worth of travel time benefits over 60 years, an average of just over £5million a year. The next steps are to hold a public consultation during the autumn, then to submit the planning application in 2022, with an aim of starting construction in 2023 and to be open for use in 2025.

NCC is asking more people to consider becoming foster carers for the county's most vulnerable children. There are just under 1,100 Looked After Children in Norfolk, and 350 foster caring households, with more demand for couples or individuals willing to support sibling groups or children who need to experience opportunities to enjoy their childhoods. To find out more about becoming a foster carer, visit the NCC website.

NCC's Adult Learning service has been named the UK's leading adult education provider at an awards ceremony. The service won the 'Adult and community learning provider of the year' award at the Tes (Times Educational Supplement) further Education Awards, often referred to as the 'Oscars of Education'. Norfolk's adult learners bucked the national trend throughout the pandemic with improvements in test scores and participation in qualification courses, which fell across the rest of the country. Norfolk was also one of the first counties to move their adult learning completely online and saw over 3,000 people learn virtually last year.

South Norfolk Council are currently holding a Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) consultation from Monday June 7th till Monday 2nd of August. This plan is seeking to allocate sites for 1,200 new dwellings, distributed across 48 village clusters centred around the Primary Schools in South Norfolk. To find out more and to comment visit www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/vchap

Best Wishes
Martin