
Minutes of The Annual Meeting of Loddon Parish held on Wednesday 9 April 2025 at 7.00pm in the Hollies Rear Hall

Present:

Chairman of Loddon Town Council: Andy Woodman

Loddon Town Council: Jane Hale, Kay Mason Billig, Julie Appleby, Mervyn Pointer, Natalie Henry, Richard Hubbard, Steven Kellingray Williamson

Holy Trinity Church: Reverend Miriam Fife

In Attendance: Emily Curtis (Town Clerk), Kerry Sturman (Responsible Finance Officer, RFO), Jo Leonard (Administration and Allotment Officer, AAO) and 6 members of the public.

Absent: None.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** None.
2. **To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on the 9 April 2024**
Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024 were **approved** as a correct record with no amendments.
3. **Loddon Town Council's Annual Reports**

3.1 **Chairman's Annual Report:**

As I near the end of my two-year tenure as Chair of Loddon Town Council, a role which I have very proud and privileged to hold, I look back with some satisfaction on our collective achievements over that period. None of those would have not been possible without my fellow councillors, Town Clerk, and dedicated staff and the legion of local volunteers. In particular, I have had tremendous support from my vice chairman, Mervyn Pointer, Emily as Clerk, Jo as Admin and Allotments Officer, Paul as the "everywhere" Parish Warden and Kerry as our new Finance and Projects Officer. And we couldn't do it without the volunteers who participate in our projects, such as the speeding sign (Sam2), litter picking, Tennis Club Subcommittee, community larder, events, Love Loddon, and the recently completed Neighbourhood Plan.

Loddon is a fabulous and perfectly placed small market town and a wonderful place to live with a vibrant and engaging population, that provides an exciting range of shops, services, and business, not only to the residents of Loddon but also to the nearby villages. We also host an unrivalled number and variety of active clubs and societies for a town of our size which all contribute to making Loddon the exciting and welcoming place that it is.

I was, as were we all, desperately sad to lose Colin Binfield last summer. Colin was, as Vice Chairman, a great help to me and was instrumental in the development of the Loddon & Chedgrave Playing Field Committee and the recovery of the Jubilee Hall Management Committee and so much more. We all miss him dearly and the Council will be installing a bench in his memory on the Loddon & Chedgrave Playing Field. We were also heartened to hear that Loddon Tennis Club has dedicated a trophy to Colin.

The completion and approval, following a positive referendum, of the Loddon and Chedgrave Chet Neighbourhood Plan was a great achievement from a host of participants and should help to better guide development applications as we move forward – and will also entitle us to a greater share of the infrastructure levies charged to land developers.

The future of local government following the impending devolution proposals is still much in the air. Although the role of the Town Council is not currently expected to change materially, we will soon fit into a single, yet to be defined, regional authority as opposed to the current two-tier (Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk District Council) situation.

The two new housing developments on the Beccles Road as well as the one on Langley Road in Chedgrave and the redevelopment of the Cannell's site will all create further challenges in terms of traffic and parking in our town and in the demand for schools, health, and dental services. These issues were thoroughly raised during the planning processes but were generally not considered as important as the provision of additional housing.

We have seen the ongoing triumph that is the Love Loddon group, superbly led by Cllr Julie Appleby, who have transformed areas such as Farthing Green, Church Plain and the Staithe. We have also established a new community orchard off Cannell Road, also being supported by the Love Loddon volunteers. My thanks to you all.

The Chet Valley Community Larder has gained strength during the year and has also had to change its operating model. It is a facility that we should all be proud of, again thanks to all involved.

The year has seen a continuation of the organisational and administrative changes to the Jubilee Hall which is now much better positioned for the future, and which would not have been possible without the strenuous efforts and commitment from the trustees. We have also been in conversations with the Trustees of the Loddon Buildings Preservation Trust regarding the future of The Hollies and have recently carried out a resident's survey regarding both The Hollies and the Jubilee Hall. None of this is easy and requires further community participation.

The remembrance parade and ceremonies were a great success as always and it was wonderful to see the people of Loddon taking part and lining the streets as it was for the enjoyable Victorian Evening in December.

The Staithe toilets and showers, for so long a drain on the council's funds because of vandalism, continue to be running well with the recently installed steel doors which has reduced the costly repairs.

At the Staithe we have installed an additional CCTV camera, thanks to a grant from District Cllrs, Jeremy Rowe and Kay Mason Billig. In addition, a publicly accessible defibrillator has been installed on the Staithe toilets thanks to generous donations from Heart2Heart and Chris Knott, LTC's Cleaning Contractor (Top2Bottom).

The year has seen the successful completion of the refurbishment of the Library Annex toilets and kitchen, which are now looking so much improved and include a shower for community gym users and staff alike. The project was funded by a Pride in Place Grant (UK Shared Prosperity Funding), a Community Action Norfolk Grant from South Norfolk Council and Loddon Town Council and will hopefully serve the community for years to come. The grant funding also assisted the Council with the installation of 'The Old School' noticeboard, which has given the Library, the gym and the Council more visibility.

The Summer Fair on the Loddon & Chedgrave Playing Field in July was lined up to be a major success with a record number of stall holders and participants. However, as the heavens opened during the morning, the event had to be cancelled before it had been opened. This was a crushing disappointment, especially for the stall holders and volunteers of the Events Committee who had worked so hard to put it all in place.

Thanks to Parish Partnership Bids with Norfolk County Council this year we have also seen further improvements to our footpaths, with another scheme having just been approved. Norfolk County Council also funded two new Church Plain bus stops with electronic boards via the Bus Stop Improvement Scheme. A replacement notice board (funded by the Town Council) is due to be installed on Church Plain imminently.

We are still in protracted discussions with South Norfolk over the completion of the planned improvements to The Staithe, the footbridge and, also, over the future of Pyes Mill. We also have expressed concerns over the threats to the Wherryman's Way improvement plans.

The council, at the timing of writing, has two councillor vacancies. We are always glad to welcome interest in councillor positions as well as volunteers on our various groups.

I'm proud to be part of Loddon, I hope you are too. It's a very special place – let's keep it that way.

I wish my successor all the best in their tenure as chair and hope they enjoy the role as much as I have.

Andy Woodman
Chair of Loddon Town Council

3.2 Clerk's Annual Report:

Another productive year for Loddon Town Council.

The Chet Neighbourhood Plan was made, which will give Loddon and Chedgrave more input and control over local planning matters.

The Council has also facilitated the following for Loddon:

Library Annexe

- Completion of the refurbishment of the kitchen and toilets and the addition of a shower to service the gym
- New noticeboard for The Old School and improvements to the frontage of the building

Loddon & Chedgrave Playing Field and Tennis Courts

- New tennis court floodlights
- New perimeter fencing for the Playing Field
- Heads Up coaching now operating at Loddon Tennis Club
- New indoor tennis initiatives via funding from a Saracen's Grant
- Jubilee hall Car Park hedge removal and tree/hedge work completed

Public Open Space and Highways

- Community Payback Team will soon be busy cleaning and painting in Loddon
- Replacement knee high fencing on the Old Hockey Field
- Old Hockey Field stile replaced with a kissing gate

- Old Hockey Field ditch clearance
- Footpath 10 improvements
- Sale Court footpath improvements
- Repairs to skate park ramps and paths
- Assisting with the installation of two new benches on Farthing Green (Benches kindly provided by Loddon, Chedgrave and District Society and Loddon & District History Group)
- Tree work on the Old Hockey Field
- Two new bus stops on Church Plain via Norfolk County Council's Bus Stop Improvement Scheme
- New noticeboard on Church Plain
- New Community Orchard off Cannell Road (trees funded by a Busseys Grant)
- New bin installed at Warren Hills
- Spring and Summer Love Loddon Community Group Flower Towers and container displays

Staithe

- South Norfolk Council began work to the footbridge
- Installation of a defibrillator thanks to Heart2Heart and Top2Bottom
- Additional CCTV thanks to Loddon's District Cllrs, Jeremy Rowe and Kay Mason Billig

Finance

- New savings and investment bank accounts opened
- The Small Grant Scheme delivered £1,900 to Loddon's organisations
- Rent review completed with an annual saving of £1,250 per annum
- Business Rates review completed with an annual saving of £4,341
- Successful internal and external audit
- Grants and donations obtained allowing the Community Larder to provide meal bags to registered residents in the Chet Valley

Events

- Summer Fete on the Loddon & Chedgrave Playing Field
- Remembrance Parade
- Loddon's Christmas Lights
- Loddon Tea Towels
- Annual Big Litter Pick
- Freedom of Loddon awarded

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported the Council with over the past twelve months, as the list above would not have been possible without their input. My thanks goes to all members of Loddon Town Council for their time, dedication, and commitment, particularly in their representative and committee roles. A special thank you to the Chairman, Andy, and Vice-Chairman, Mervyn, for their continued support and steadfast leadership.

We are especially grateful to all the volunteers who have contributed their time at meetings and Council events throughout the year. The Council's wide range of activities simply would not be possible without the hard work and commitment of these community-minded individuals.

We are also very fortunate to have a dedicated and hardworking team of staff:

- **Paul**, our Parish Warden, plays a vital role in ensuring the Council remains compliant with health and safety standards. He also maintains parish land,

footpaths, and facilities to a high standard. His visible presence within the community is of great value to the Council and we appreciate all he does.

- **Jo**, our Allotment and Administration Officer, ensures the smooth management of the allotments, diligently handles office administration tasks and we'd be lost without her.
- **Kerry**, our relatively new Responsible Financial Officer, has been instrumental in ensuring that the Council meets its financial responsibilities in a timely and organised manner. Kerry has also taken on additional project work to support the Council's wider objectives.

Our thanks also extend to the various contractors who have worked alongside us over the past year, assisting with project delivery and the maintenance of the Council's facilities and public open spaces.

I would also like to take a moment to remember Councillor Colin Binfield, who sadly passed away on 24 July 2024. Colin's cheerful nature and dedication to Loddon is sorely missed.

The Council is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan that will guide the management of our existing facilities and inform future developments within Loddon. We currently have two Councillor vacancies and are seeking proactive, community-minded residents who are eager to contribute to the delivery of these initiatives for the benefit of the whole town.

Emily Curtis
Town Clerk

3.2 Responsible Finance Officer's Annual Report

Loddon Town Council's 2024/25 annual budget was £208,226. We are primarily funded by the precept that is collected by South Norfolk Council on our behalf.

The Town Council provides and maintains the following services and facilities on behalf of Loddon residents;

- Community Larder
- Christmas lights
- Straihe Toilets
- The Old School Community Building
- Old Hockey Field Public Open Space
- Loddon & Chedgrave Playing Field
- Streetlighting
- Freedom of Loddon
- Community Events
- Allotments
- Small Grants
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Skate Parks
- Play Areas
- Tennis Courts
- War Memorial
- Community Orchard
- Benches, noticeboards, dog foul bins and litter bins

I joined LTC in January 2025 so am still very new to the role but am enjoying the challenge of learning how the Council works. I would like to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome and particularly to Anne Barnes for providing support and training to me.

We are now entering into our busiest time of the year with our year end process and again a steep learning curve as this is my first time processing the AGAR reporting. Anne is supporting me throughout.

I have enjoyed assisting the Council projects to date, and I look forward to assisting the Council execute its projects and aims for the upcoming year.

Kerry Sturman
Responsible Financial Officer

3.3 Loddon & Chedgrave Playing Field Committee Annual Report

Cllr JH gave a verbal report.

3.4 Loddon Tennis Club Subcommittee Annual Report

No report.

3.5 Finance and Governance Committee Annual Report

The Finance and Governance Committee was formed at the LTC meeting of 11th December 2024 for the purpose of reviewing matters of finance and government outside of full council meetings and to reduce the workload of those meetings.

It met for the first time on 26th February 2025 and elected Cllr Andy Woodman as chair and Cllr Richard Hubbard as vice chair.

3.6 Personnel Committee Annual Report

The Committee in line with the Terms of Reference, has met six times this year to discuss relevant personnel matters brought to the committee.

Current members:

Councillor MP Chairman, Councillor JA Vice Chair. Councillors AW and NH Committee members.

In May 24 the Committee put forward a candidate to fill the role of RFO this followed the councils agreed recruitment process. The council supported this proposal and on the 3 2024, the RFO started in their role. Unfortunately, the RFO resigned due to being offered full time employment elsewhere.

So, in November 2024, we again went through the recruitment process and at the December full council meeting put forward a candidate to fill the role of RFO and Project Officer. This proposal was agreed by the council and on January 13th Kerry Sturman became the Council's RFO.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anne Barnes who on two occasions over the last year has taken on the role of Locum RFO whilst we recruited replacement RFO'S and helped them settle it to their new positions.

Various policies and governance documents have been updated during the year.

One to One's and staff appraisals have been carried out over the year.

Councillor Mervyn Pointer

3.7 Love Loddon Community Group Annual Report

2024

April/May

- The new benches were installed at Farthing Green.
- Tendered local nurseries for our bedding plant order. Most competitive and helpful were Homestead Nurseries.
- Planting took place and watering rota implemented

September

- Planning and review meeting in The Swan
- Stripping out of the summer bedding and Winter violas were planted

October

- Bulb planting Farthing Green and Church Plain
- Bulb planting with the Brownies, along the Beccles Road

November

- Clearing leaves from Church Plain Car Park.
- Sponsorship confirmed for the 2025 Planters from Cecil Amey, opticians

2025

January

- Planning and review meeting in The Swan

February

- Tidied Church Plain. Introduction of 'Leaf Mould Pile' for leaf composting in Holy Trinity Churchyard

March

- Tidied Farthing Green

April

- Tidied the 'B-Line' bed and paths around The Staithe

Plans:

- Stripping out violas and replanting with summer bedding at the end of May
- Watering rota to be implemented
- A new noticeboard ordered and will be installed on Church Plain
- The Community Payback team, are due to begin projects such as painting the railings imminently

The success of the LLCG is thanks to around 30 volunteers from the local community, with approximately ten attending each event.

Grateful thanks, in particular, to Cllr Mervyn Pointer for his hands-on help and support. Also, to Chair Andy Woodman and the office team for help with admin, social media and supplies.

Cllr Julie Appleby

Lead of Love Loddon Community Group

3.8 Chet Valley Community Larder Annual Report

Loddon Town Council took ownership of the Chet Valley Community Larder & Fridge in September 2024, and our RFO/Project Officer Kerry administers the team of volunteers and manages the project on behalf of the Council.

The Community Larder (CL) supports a whole cross-section of residents from the Chet Valley (Loddon, Chedgrave, Hales & Heckingham, Langley & Hardley, Sisland). Our

volunteers hold two manned sessions that are held in Loddon Library on a Monday and Saturday and those in need can register for a food bag that contains £5 of ingredients to prepare a wholesome family meal. Although demand varies, on average, it is currently distributing 10 meal bags per week. The registration process ensures that the food bags are being received by those most in need. The shelves remain open to donations / food swaps. The manned sessions also give an opportunity for the volunteers to build relationships with the users and signpost support and help available from other organisations.

Loddon Town Council has budgeted £1,000 for 2025/26 to help fund the project, but in order to fulfil the current demand for food bags, the total expenditure for the upcoming financial year is expected to be £2,600. Loddon Town Council is seeking donations from the public, grants and other forms of fundraising to meet the target.

Currently there are 40 households registered. Our increased publicity on social media has increased awareness of the larder and help those in need to come forward for assistance. We are always seeking volunteers to help man the library sessions on a Monday and Saturday as although we have several volunteers involved with the project, we need more help at the actual manned sessions.

3.9 Chet Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Annual Report

Cllr JH gave a verbal report.

3.10 Events Working Party Annual Report

No report.

4. Parish Annual Reports

4.1 County Councillor, Kay Mason Billig:

Council Delivers Balanced Budget and calls for cost-saving local government reorganisation

Norfolk County Council has approved a balanced budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year, despite facing considerable financial challenges.

Key Details from the Norfolk County Council Budget:

- **Gross Budget:** The council has a gross expenditure budget of £2.2 billion (£1.7 billion excluding schools). This includes:
 - £700 million for Adult Social Care
 - £367 million for Children's Services (non-schools)
 - £283 million for Infrastructure
 - £44 million for Communities and Environment
 - £46 million for Fire Services

Net Budget: The net budget for 2025/26 is £572 million. This represents the amount raised through Council Tax to fund the services provided by the council.

- **Budget Growth:** The 2025/26 budget includes an increase of £121 million, which covers:
 - £31 million for inflationary pressures
 - £35 million for legislative pressures (including the increase in the National Living Wage and higher Employers National Insurance contributions)
 - £15 million for demand and demographic pressures
 - Over £25 million to cover recurrent overspends from Adult and Children's Services in 2024/25.
- **Funding and Savings:** While costs have risen by £121 million, funding has only increased by £32 million. The Government has eliminated the Rural Services Delivery Grant and reallocated funds from rural to metropolitan areas. To balance the budget, savings of £45 million will be implemented.

- **Council Tax:** For 2025/26, Council Tax will increase by 4.99%, which includes a 3% rise for general Council Tax and a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care precept. A Band D household will pay £1,755.63 per year, or around £34 per week, for County Council services in 2025/26.

Norfolk announced as priority area for new powers and funding

Norfolk is set to gain new powers and funding following a significant Government announcement on 5th February 2025. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner revealed that Norfolk would be a priority area for devolution and local government reform. As part of this, the Government is seeking to create a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk, which would include the introduction of an elected mayor.

In addition, there are plans to reshape local government in Norfolk. The Government intends to replace the current two-tier structure, where services are shared between county and district councils, with unitary authorities. This would centralize decision-making and service delivery into a single authority, streamlining local government processes and potentially increasing efficiency and saving taxpayers money.

These changes will empower local areas with more control over their services and funding. For further details on the progress of devolution and the impact of these reforms, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/devolution, where you can also find answers to frequently asked questions from the Local Government Association. To watch an informative video [go to our video explaining devolution and local government reform.](#)

Norfolk signs historic agreement with Ukrainian region of Lviv

A cooperation agreement has been signed between Norfolk County Council and the Ukrainian region of Lviv which is designed to explore knowledge transfer, educational exchange and trade opportunities.

The historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Thursday 2 May at the Ukrainian Embassy in London by Leader of Norfolk County Council Kay Mason Billig and in Lviv via video link by Maksym Kozytskyi, Head of the Lviv Regional Military Administration. It is the first such agreement to be signed with Lviv by any part of the UK.

Cllr Mason Billig was joined at the ceremony by Liz Truss MP, as the MP for South West Norfolk, Cllr Fabian Eagle Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Cllr Chris Dawson, Rural Champion, Chris Starkie, Director of Growth and Investment, and Roberta Willner, Head of Economic Development. Also there to witness the signing of the agreement was Nataliya Klymko, Programmes Coordinator for Growth and Investment.

Both Norwich and Lviv have links to UNESCO: Norwich is a UNESCO City of Literature, and the historic part of Lviv city (300-acre historic centre) is included in the UNESCO World Heritage list. In 2022, Lviv was granted Freedom of the City of Norwich in solidarity with Ukraine, and the MoU - similar to a twinning arrangement - will further celebrate and build on these links.

Norfolk and Lviv have identified several key opportunities for collaborative working, including the TechBridge programme, a strategic partnership between the UK Government, Ukraine Ministry of Digital Transformation and Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs to forge connections between our tech ecosystems.

This partnership currently runs to 2025 but may be extended, providing businesses in both locations access to expert advice and support in navigating the barriers to UK-Ukraine trade. There are also specialist investment accelerator programmes for Ukraine tech SMEs looking to expand overseas.

The skills and knowledge the local Lviv tech sector offers are recognised on the international level. For example, Lviv IT specialists developed the Skype app and special effects for films such as Harry Potter and Spider-Man. Norfolk also has a strong growing ICT/Digital sector with several individual clusters, and the MoU will encourage collaboration within the sector between our regions by participating in mutual events of interest.

This not only benefits cluster growth in a key sector for Norwich and Norfolk's digital services and would benefit Lviv through the contribution to the recovery efforts.

Other opportunities for collaboration include an incoming visit to the Theatre Royal Norwich in October by the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine, led by leading conductor, Theodore Kuchar.

Norfolk County Council opposes National Grid pylon scheme

Councillors in Norfolk have objected to a National Grid proposal to construct an electricity transmission line across the county.

National Grid has launched a statutory consultation on plans for an 114 mile overhead power line between Norwich in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex.

In non-statutory consultations, Norfolk County Council has urged National Grid to reconsider the scheme, but the project will be determined by the secretary of state for energy security and net zero as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

Norfolk County Council's planning and highways delegations committee have agreed to object to the proposal, arguing that alternative options, including an offshore or underground scheme, had not been adequately considered.

At a recent full council meeting, councillors backed a motion expressing concerns over the proposals.

That motion called for Kay Mason Billig, leader of the Conservative-controlled council to write to National Grid with several requests, including further consideration of an offshore alternative and of putting more of the power line underground.

Norfolk set to receive highest highways maintenance allocation in the region

Norfolk is set to receive more than £56 million for highways maintenance this year.

Funding for every local authority across England today can be used throughout 2025/6 on the roads are in most need of repair, and to deliver immediate fixes for communities across Norfolk.

This comes just a few weeks after Norfolk took the top spot for the second year in a row in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) survey on roads and transport. People from across the county gave Norfolk the highest (above average) score in satisfaction with the condition of the highways.

More than 5,300 potholes have been fixed across Norfolk since April this year and of those 99% were repaired by our contractors within the agreed response times. If you see a pothole - don't assume someone else has reported it. Let us know by completing our online form: www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes

Norfolk's highways set for major investment in the year ahead

This month Norfolk County Council Cabinet has reviewed a series of investments and improvements to the county's highways infrastructure.

Documents reveal how 97 parishes, from Antingham to Worstead, will benefit from projects funded through the Council's Parish Partnership scheme. The 2025/26 programme is designed to deliver what local communities have requested, including trods, village gateways, bus shelters, and vehicle-activated signs.

The programme is jointly funded by Norfolk County Council and contributions from Town and Parish Councils. This year, Norfolk County Council plans to contribute £425,476, enabling a total investment of £848,702 for local projects.

The Cabinet has also reviewed the highways capital programme, which highlights successes from the previous year and outlines how highways maintenance funding will be allocated for the coming 12 months. This includes an additional £15 million from the Department for Transport (DfT).

With this extra funding, an additional 100 miles of roads in Norfolk will be resurfaced this year, supporting the Council's proactive approach to highway maintenance that helps prevent potholes. The funding will also provide additional resources for local repairs and patching across the county.

Herring Bridge receives further national awards

The new Herring Bridge in Great Yarmouth, which opened in February, received further national recognition at a Highway Awards ceremony in London last night.

Norfolk County Council's nationally significant infrastructure project won the Major Project of Year award and was also later announced as winner for the Highways Special Merit award across all shortlisted finalists.

This follows the bridge already receiving Major Project of the Year at the New Civil Engineer awards early this summer.

The Highway Awards were held on Tuesday 24th September at Park Plaza, Westminster Bridge in London, with shortlisted entries decided by an expert panel of twelve judges.

Norfolk's entry was a joint submission with consultants WSP who worked with the council and partners to take the project, constructed by BAM Farrans joint venture, from its inception through to delivery.

Norfolk County Council committed over £1m to keep people warm last winter

Proposals to support some of Norfolk's most vulnerable people this winter have been set out today.

Norfolk County Council is looking to use £1.15m of the £6.7m allocated to the county through the Household Support Fund to keep people warm and help them make ends meet.

The county council will use £0.75m to partner with local organisations, including Age UK and Citizens Advice Bureau, to reach some of those most affected by the changes to the Winter Fuel Payments. They will also put £400k into the 'warm spaces' scheme which provides vital respite in community spaces across the county.

The proposals also include £3.6m to continue providing cost-of-living vouchers for families eligible for means tested free school meals. This is in addition to:

- £1.00m to Norfolk Assistance Scheme. Delivered by the Norfolk County Council, the scheme includes direct award of assistance, the provision of household items and emergency help, alongside a range of support and guidance
- £0.70m to local councils across Norfolk to provide proactive and crisis support
- £0.25m to Adult Learning to continue free access to a range of courses to help with cooking at home, budgeting, and digital skills.

New strategy puts Norfolk at the forefront of the UK economy

Ambitious plans for Norfolk's economy have been unveiled in a new strategy to be presented to the county council's cabinet in November.

The strategy seeks to build on Norfolk's influence in key sectors, including clean energy, agri-tech and cutting-edge research.

Norfolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, sets out an overview of the local economy and key priority areas for economic growth.

Norfolk is already at the forefront of some of the UK's most strategically important sectors.

Norfolk is a global leader for offshore wind with £39bn of clean energy investment forecasted over the next 20 years. In Great Yarmouth, the new Operations and Maintenance Campus is expected to create 650 new jobs and new commercial space for the offshore renewable energy sector. This £24.8m partnership project is a collaboration with Great Yarmouth Borough Council, with enabling works well underway.

Work is also underway to examine how to decarbonise the gas supply through the development of a 'Bacton Energy Hub', reusing existing North Sea assets for carbon storage, and blue/green hydrogen production.

The local Agri-Food and Agri-Tech economy puts Norfolk at the epicentre of addressing challenges around food security and climate change. Norwich Research Park is a world-leading research base at the forefront of global food and health research. It is Europe's largest single site hub of research, training, education, and enterprise in food and health.

Norfolk is already well known for a visitor economy which accounts for nearly 20% of all employment. The county was recently successful in bidding to become a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, alongside Visit East of England and Suffolk County Council. This put

them on an even footing with the likes of Cornwall, the Peak District, and the Cotswolds who have the same level of Visit England accreditation.

Major infrastructure projects continue to transform how residents and businesses get around. The completion of the Herring Bridge and the start of construction on the long-awaited Long Stratton Bypass will bring a major boost for the local economy. Norfolk has also seen year-on-year growth in bus passenger numbers and the introduction of a major electric bus fleet. The county council continues to push for improvements along the A47, with an ongoing campaign to improve connectivity and safety through further dualling in key areas.

Norfolk has built an increasingly enterprising culture, supporting residents to start up their own business, and for new start-ups to survive and thrive. Norfolk has a better than UK average for survival of new businesses at 63% after 3 years, compared to the UK average of 56%.

New Anglia Growth Hub acts as the 'front door' for local businesses looking for support. Over the past 10 years, the Growth Hub has supported over 14,000 businesses with free, impartial support and advice.

Norfolk County Council supports Norfolk's Family Farms

Conservative-led Norfolk County Council is taking proactive steps to support the county's hard-working family farms in response to recent budget announcements from the Labour Government. Recognizing the essential role that farming plays in the local economy, the Council is submitting and debating a motion aimed at ensuring that Norfolk's farmers are well-supported as they navigate the challenges brought on by these new policies.

The motion reflects the Council's strong commitment to championing local businesses, with a particular focus on protecting the livelihoods of those who sustain Norfolk's agricultural heritage. Norfolk's family farms are the backbone of rural communities, and the Conservative-led Council is dedicated to ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

Understanding the issues that local farmers face, ranging from financial pressures to complex regulatory changes, the motion highlights the importance of offering practical support.

Norfolk County Council is committed to creating a future where local farmers can thrive, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous agricultural sector for generations to come.

Norfolk street lighting goes green

Norfolk is leading the way in energy efficiency with the successful completion of its street lighting upgrade project, finishing almost a year ahead of schedule. This major initiative will cut CO2 emissions by over 200 tonnes annually, helping the county make significant strides toward a greener, more sustainable future.

The upgrade, carried out by Amey on behalf of Norfolk County Council, involved replacing 16,800 traditional High-Intensity Discharge (HID) lights with 15,531 state-of-the-art LED lanterns. This transition, which began in August 2023, will ensure that, starting in November 2024, 100% of Norfolk County Council's street lighting will use low-energy LEDs.

The final phase of this project will save approximately 1,099,032 kWh of energy each year, translating to an estimated £380,000 in savings based on current electricity prices.

Since the first LED streetlights were installed in 2008, the county has saved around 71 million kWh of energy, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by over 22,200 tonnes, equivalent to the carbon savings of 6.7 million litres of diesel. This project marks another significant achievement in Norfolk's ongoing commitment to reducing its environmental impact and promoting energy sustainability.

Discover the Best of Norfolk: Explore 1,500 Miles of Scenic Trails for Walking, Cycling, and Horse-Riding

Norfolk offers over 1,500 miles of beautiful walking, cycling, and horse-riding routes, each showcasing the county's unique nature and rich cultural heritage. Whether you're exploring

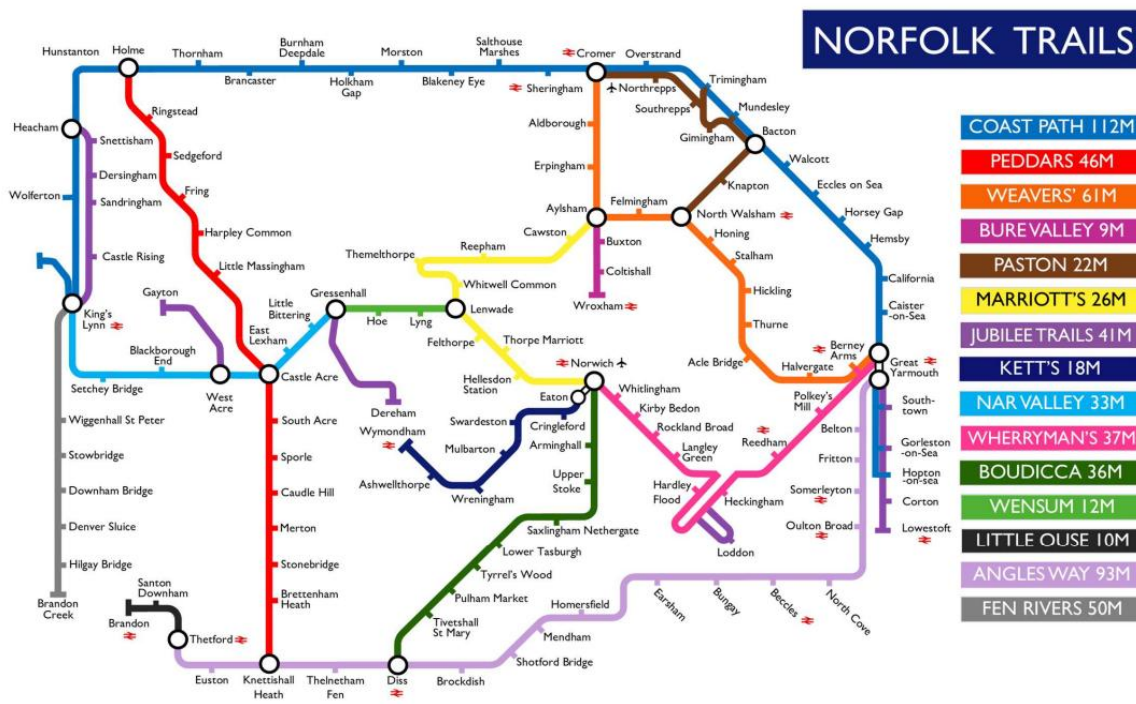
tranquil river valleys, historic landscapes, or scenic coastal paths, Norfolk's trails offer something for every adventurer.

Highlights include the **Angles Way**, a 93-mile walking route through woodlands and heathland, and the **Boudicca Way**, a 36-mile journey through ancient Roman and Iceni heritage sites. For those seeking to explore the Broads, the **Bure Valley Path** offers a 9-mile route along a heritage railway. History buffs will enjoy the **Kett's Country Trail**, which follows the story of Kett's Rebellion, while the **Peddars Way** takes you along an ancient Roman road.

Other stunning routes include the **Norfolk Coast Path** (a 112-mile National Trail), the **Marriott's Way** (26 miles of scenic walking, cycling, and horse-riding), and the **Wherryman's Way**, a 40-mile trek through the beautiful Broads National Park.

Whether you're interested in history, nature, or simply exploring the countryside, Norfolk's extensive network of trails provides the perfect way to experience this beautiful region.

For more information please visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/42852/Norfolk-Trails



Working Well Norfolk helping people with long-term health issues to keep working

A scheme to support people in Norfolk with long-term health issues get back into employment or continue in their jobs has already helped more than 1,100 participants.

The Working Well Norfolk programme, launched in October 2023, supports individuals with long-term health issues to return to or stay in work. It has already helped over 1,100 participants, with 200 moving into work and 150 staying employed despite health challenges. The programme has received 1,600 referrals and will continue for another 18 months, with additional funding to help 730 more people, totalling 1,830 participants by September 2026. The £5.2m project is managed by Norfolk County Council and delivered by Seetec Pluss and Standguide Ltd. For more info or to refer, visit Working Well Norfolk - Seetec Pluss or call 01603 561054.

Kay Mason Billig
County Councillor and District Cllr

4.2 District Councillor:

No report from District Cllr Kay Mason Billig.

No report from District Cllr Jeremy Rowe.

4.3 Loddon Town Estate Charity

This past year was another busy one for the Trust, both from an applications perspective and changes to the Trustees. The Trust received numerous enquiries from individuals in need of assistance. Sadly, the Trust was unable to help some of these people, for different reasons, but our secretary, Julie Ponsford, did a great job of trying to guide those unsuccessful parties to organisations that could help. I would like to thank Julie for her hard work in dealing with all the enquiries, keeping Trustees up to date and assisting those eligible for assistance.

From an income perspective, the Trust once again received a number of generous donations from members of the community during 2024. However, Income decreased by almost 21% on 2023. This was due to a large donation, received in 2023, from a local business that had been collecting for the Trust for over a year. Despite this, 2024 was still a healthy year for income.

As we head into what could continue to be a challenging time financially, I hope the Trust can reach those in the community in need of support and can continue the wonderful work it has done for many years now.

Finally, we said goodbye to our Chair of over ten years, David Owen, following his retirement in June and I would like to record all the Trustees' thanks for his hard work and dedication to the Trust. I would like to welcome Nigel Stock as a Trustee, replacing Levi Lovelock who stood down, and look forward to working with him as we continue the Trust's work. I will be Acting Chair until our new incumbent, Miriam Fife, wishes to take the Chair following her licensing on Monday 17th March 2025.

Val Counter
Acting Chair

4.4 Loddon & Chedgrave Jubilee Hall Management Committee (JHMC)

No report.

4.5 Holy Trinity Church

Thanks for invitation to meeting and for the warm welcome I and family have received. Having been inducted as Rector just 2 weeks ago, I don't have much to report on, but the annual meetings of the church council were held recently and so I can give a summary report from Holy Trinity extracted from various reports presented there.

Two church wardens were re-elected, along with other church officers and ten PCC members from the laity.

Holy Trinity has at last received its quinquennial inspection report on the condition of the fabric of the building; urgent recommendations have been carried out and other requirements will be addressed in order of importance as long as funding allows.

The clock has been serviced and new bell ropes installed.

Unfortunately, there was some vandalism in 2024 which resulted in more than £6,000 worth of damage to windows, now repaired.

Despite occasional acts of vandalism, we recognise the value of keeping the church building open during the day and are looking for more volunteers to be present in the building at busy times during the summer months. Although we have done all we can to risk assess and mitigate as far as possible, we aim to have two welcomers present at all times.

I would be grateful if council members might consider helping with this, if they know anyone who could offer a few hours each week to sit in the church.

Church finances were reported to be in reasonably good shape, thanks to the enormous fundraising efforts by several members of the PCC. Council members may not be aware that

parish churches receive no government or central funding; each parish church has to raise enough every year to pay the Norwich Diocese for the central support offered and for ministry provision, as well as maintaining the church building. We also strive to fulfil our pledges for charitable giving, and make donations to just causes where we can.

As we are a Local Ecumenical Partnership, we also raise funds to pay the Methodist Assessment fee, which ensures that St John's chapel remains viable.

The Church in Loddon would be grateful if the Council could assist in any way in raising awareness that Holy Trinity and St John's, although first and foremost places of worship, are also important as buildings for community use and part of our heritage. Holy Trinity is there for everyone in the parish, and the responsibility for the maintenance of the building lies with us all. We would welcome anyone who wishes to be involved to join the Friends of Holy Trinity.

We are grateful for the support of the Town Council which enables us to pay for grass cutting in the church yard and winding of the clock.

I was inducted, installed and licensed as Rector of the Chet Valley Benefice on Monday 17th March. My family and I are very grateful for the warm welcome we have received from all in Loddon. I look forward to meeting you individually over the course of time and look forward to welcoming you at our special services for Holy Week and Easter, at our community events and beyond.

Thank you.

Reverend Miriam Fife

4.6 Loddon Building Preservation Trust (LBPT)

No report.

4.7 Loddon Community Gym

Loddon Community Gym and its members continue to enjoy operating from The Library Annexe and are grateful for the support we receive from everyone at Loddon Town Council.

In April 2024, Loddon Community Gym, celebrated 10 years since first opening the gym doors to the public. We celebrated our 10-year anniversary by organising a sponsored 1000 miles in 12-hours challenge which took place at the gym. Many of our members took part in the event by either rowing, running, walking or cycling and received sponsorship for doing so.

We were very pleased to reach our target thus raising much needed funds both for the gym and for British Heart Foundation (our chosen charity for the event) and those funds were shared equally. On the day, a representative from British Heart Foundation attended the gym, he kindly demonstrated CPR, which is such a vital tool for everyone to have.

Since January 2025, Loddon Community Gym has welcomed many new members (about 23 new members) and it is great to see so many people exercising and improving their fitness, each one with their own individual goal.

Thanks to Loddon Town Council and the Pride in Place grant, the gym is benefitting from the use of brand-new facilities including a shower and toilets....many of our members are very pleased with the refurbishment. Thank you again from the committee.

The gym trialled a 7am gym session on Wednesdays back in January. Thankfully, this is proving popular with members and we have therefore decided to continue running the session.....great for anyone who fancies exercising before a busy day at work.

For anyone who would like to join the gym, please pop your head into the gym and have a chat with Louise who is our Fitness Instructor and Personal Trainer.

4.8 Other reports as received

Annual Report from Loddon Flower Club

Loddon Flower Club is an active Club with 40 members and meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at The Lecture Hall, George Lane, Loddon. Our meetings are for members and visitors when we have a demonstrator showing us how to do different arrangements and explain what type of flowers and foliage to use.

All the arrangements are raffled off at the end of the evening.

Our members take part in competitions from time to time to win our club trophies.

We hold flower arranging workshops for members and the people of Loddon to join in.

We have taken part in National Flower Arranging Day, which is usually in May, where we leave flower arrangements in Loddon and surrounding villages for members of the community to pick up and take home. These are much appreciated and we receive lots of lovely comments from recipients.

We arrange an outing every year and last year we went to Hunstanton for the NAFAS 70 year celebrations. This year we plan to go to Houghton Hall in July.

We have arranged flowers, mainly in Holy Trinity Church, Loddon, for weddings and funerals. Do take a look at our website: www.loddonflowerclub.co.uk for photos and reports on our last year.

Tricia Godfrey
Chairman

Annual Report from Loddon WI

The official year end for the WI is November so this report will cover the period up until November 2024.

Loddon & District WI continue to go from strength to strength. We now have some 48 members including quite a few ladies from the new housing estates.

The year has been extremely active from the Green Hearts campaign to decoupage, birthday celebrations (our 94th birthday), visit to Hotter Shoes, our Human Fruit Machine, various speakers at meetings including a talk about wasps. We have had an African Drumming session and tried some Bollywood dancing. To round all that off we had a very relaxing and enjoyable garden party in August.

We have organized sewing and craft days for us and members of the community. We also organize the knit & natter sessions at Loddon Library. We ran a 'learn to patchwork & quilt' course during the months of May and June.

We have organized theatre trips to the Theatre Royale Norwich and have seen several shows over the period of the year.

We run an annual competition for members and have taken part in the Horticultural Club Annual Show WI entry.

We also support the Victorian Evening and try to support other local events.

As can be seen we are a very active group and hope we continue to be. This being said all this could only have happened with the teamwork of our committee and the support of our members.

Margaret Whittaker
President

Annual Report from Loddon & District Horticultural Society

We are a friendly and relaxed Horticultural Society and currently have around 40 members, meeting every second Wednesday of the month at the Loddon Jubilee Hall.

Our yearly programme consists of hosting 5 speakers a year, on these evenings we have a table show for The Copland Cup, all members and speakers vote with a button for their favourite entry, at the end of the year the member with the most buttons holds the Cup. We have 4 shows including our Annual Open Show, which is open to all. It is held in the main Jubilee Hall and is always very well attended. We are extremely grateful to the Loddon Town Council for the 'Small Grant Fund' awarded to us which helps cover expenses incurred by the Annual Open Show. In the summer our members go to visit a garden with refreshments included. We have a Bring & Buy evening with our AGM, A Cheese and Wine evening with the Autumn mini show and a Christmas Meal out.

In May we hold a Plant Sale in The Hollies and as of last year we included a cafe with drinks, cakes and savouries, it proves to be a very popular event. The Society takes part in Competitions three times per year and in the Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society Shows where we often win trophies.

Annual Report from Chedgrave Bowls Club

Over the 2024 / 2025 season, the club has continued to thrive and grow with development on and off the green. We are delighted with how well established our club is in the community and it is fabulous to see so many people enjoying the sport of lawn bowls and the community created through playing or watching -

Just a few headlines from last season

Our membership has grown to over 50 playing members and around 20 social members, of all ages.

We enjoyed some fantastic bowls on the green with 5 teams competing across 4 leagues, cup competitions and some brave members also representing the club individually in county wide cup competitions. This will expand to every evening and three afternoons in the summer ahead as well as weekends.

Our social calendar is as busy as ever with internal competitions, weekend roll-ups and general merriment taking prime position. Our 'Ron Bias' stand built in 2024 by our members has never been so popular! (and is the envy of most visiting clubs!) It also provides excellent access for those with limited mobility to enjoy social time with friends. We are supported by members and businesses within the local community who's commitment to the club is nothing short of amazing in both time and donations. We were delighted to see Limecrete win our sponsors shield on finals day.

Off the green, we significantly increased our social media presence last season on Facebook and Instagram. Our aim is to reach our local youth to demonstrate what lawn bowls has to offer them as well as our wider community. We wish to raise the awareness of what great fun, accessible and inclusive lawn bowls is! It's no longer a game just for retired people and our schools' events run by Paul Graveling will result this year in club players from 12 years old playing with members of all ages including some over 90 and beyond. Our social diary continues to take bookings with trips to theatre, shows, horse racing and off course the Bowls World Championship at Potters – Great days out.

Following 17 years at the helm, Simon and Karen Peck have handed over the keys to the White Horse to a new management team. Under the leadership of Simon and Karen, the White Horse has been a massive advocate and supporter of our club, and we are hugely

appreciative that we have been able to work together with them so closely for so many years. We are also fortunate that the new White Horse owners, Yash and Setu Patel, have committed to continue to support our club and we look forward to building a strong relationship with them going forward. They have exciting plans.

Sadly, we were met with the devastating loss of one of our founding members, league captain and dear friend, Les Jacobs, who passed away in January following a short illness. Les' passing is a great loss to our members and our club and in fitting memorial we will be opening our 2025 season with a two-leg match against the Loddon Swan.

It shows the community strength in the club as the entire membership continue to support each other and Pat Jacobs over the period. Not forgetting our 2024 nominated local charity, Chet Chat, which this year has been humbling. Led by Jeremy Rowe we were delighted to be involved in manpower and fund raising supporting their community work.

We are now in full swing to ready ourselves for the 2025 season. Our green team, led by Craig, are in full preparation mode ahead of opening the green on 19th April. The last 4 years of investment and work that has gone into the green has really paid dividends and our playing surface is unrecognisable versus previous years!

Make sure you take note of our summer evening events in conjunction with The White Horse Chedgrave for fun in the sun. Follow ourselves or The White Horse Chedgrave on social for latest news and get involved.

In fact, why not join us at our Open Day Sunday 27th April 2025 10.00am to try the sport of bowls – meet the members, share some giggles and stories – we can provide all equipment and welcome all irrespective of experience -

We are very proud of what we have delivered in a short space of time and the positive feedback we have from members for the sense of belonging and support we provide. We are after all a social club that plays bowls.

With warmest regards from Chedgrave Bowls Club

Annual Report from Chet Valley B-Line

The Chet Valley B-Line (CVBL) is in an interregnum at the moment. We were funded with a grant from Water Mills and Marshes (WMM), a lottery funded scheme administered by the Broads Authority. This scheme came to an end over a year ago. There is though a grant application submitted for a successor scheme which if successful will last for a longer time, eight years as against five for the WMM. It will also encompass the whole of the Chet catchment and extend further upstream of rivers such as the Yare and Wensum than the WMM did. There is no guarantee the CVBL will be part of this new scheme although we are confident we have a good chance.

At the moment the CVBL is existing with no funds except for a recent grant of £250 from Tesco Express in Poringland to carry out a refresh of the pollinator planter in front of the store. Three pupils from Framingham Earl High School who are doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award have volunteered to be responsible for designing and implementing the planter upgrade. One of the pupils has designed an information board to go on the planter which is attached. The planter because of its location outside the store gives the B-Line a good deal of recognition in Poringland. It is also near the source of the Chet and the start of the B-Line.

The CVBL is essentially about increasing awareness and knowledge of what pollinators need and how people can help. The aim of B-Lines is to have 3 km wide corridors along river valleys with gaps no greater than 500 metres between areas of habitat. This is the longest

distance some solitary bees can fly. There are around 250 species of bees in the UK. Other groups of pollinators are also important and include hoverflies and beetles. The B in B-Lines stands for bugs, a colloquial term for insects.

With the grant from WMM, the B-Line did achieve quite a lot. Much of its funds were used to pay the Norfolk Wildlife Trust pollinators sessions in several of the local primary schools. These included Loddon Junior, Alington Primary, Seething Primary, Brooke Primary, Rockland Primary and Poringland Primary.

While we wait to see if we are successful getting another grant we are doing what we can to fly the flag. We have our Chet Valley B-Line Facebook page and we have arranged on an ad hoc basis for volunteers to carry out work to benefit pollinators. Back in 2019 Poringland Parish Council agreed to have a two acre wildflower meadow on its 33 acre Community Land Project. This project is at the head of the Chet and thus the start of the B-Line. Green hay was added to the meadow in 2021 and the B-Line has organised the late summer mowing and raking with the help of local volunteers. I have also heard that B-Lines are going to be part of the green infrastructure of the Greater Norwich Local Plan although I am not sure what is happening with the GNLP since the change of government. I hope to have news though of further funding for the next annual report allowing us to be ambitious again.

Rodney Aldis
Secretary

Loddon & District Royal British Legion

This year has been another good year for the Branch, the numbers are down slightly from 50 to 48 due to Members passing away.

The Branch has been active on awareness events, mainly at Seething Control Tower open days, talking to members of the public including Veterans. At these events we have taken the opportunity to raise funds for both the Poppy Appeal and Branch funds which have proved successful. I wish to thank the members who have helped with these events and at times doing all the work.

The Branch has also had a presence at events across the County, which include the Loddon Branch Standard being present.

The Remembrance events held in Loddon this year, have also been well attended and have had been praised by the Dignitaries present.

The Town Council have said they will work with us on the VJ 80 Commemorations next year.

5. **Public Forum**
None.

6. **Date of the Next Meeting**
Annual Meeting of the Parish - Wednesday 8 April 2026 at 7.00pm.

The meeting ended at 19.26pm.