

Happy New Year.

Multi-million pound investment proposed to modernise Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service buildings

A multi million pound proposal to modernise fire and rescue buildings across the county is set to be considered by Norfolk County Council's Cabinet next week.

The work is part of the council's ongoing infrastructure investment to improve the inclusivity of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) buildings to ensure they are fit for the future as the service recruits more women and looks to improve and standardise the layouts of its buildings for the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.

NFRS has looked at the equity of facilities at its fire stations, as well as what more it can do to minimise contamination of potentially harmful substances and recommended a range of changes to station layouts and facilities. These aim to create more purpose-built facilities for women and improve zoning to minimise the risk of contaminant spread.

Cabinet has now been asked to approve a three-stage approach to prioritising the modernisation of stations which requires an allocation of £2m from existing capital for 2024-25; with a follow-on £2m bid expected for 2025-26.

More modern fire stations, such as Carrow in Norwich will require minimum interventions, with the majority of the improvements focused at on-call stations. If agreed, the timetable will be realigned to other initiatives such as decarbonisation of the wider county council estate to ensure best value for money.

NFRS also asked for cabinet acknowledgement of an estimated further £4.5m requirement for work beyond 2026 for improvements to its remaining estate.

The bid fits with the council's Strategic Property Asset Management Framework 2021/22 to 2026/27 to provide the right property, fit for purpose, in the right place, to meet current service delivery needs and to plan for the future.

Devolution deal accepted by Full Council

County councillors have voted to accept a county deal devolution agreement with the Government, to transfer significant funding and powers to Norfolk.

Government funding will start transferring to Norfolk next summer, if councillors vote in July 2024 to stage the first election for a leader in May 2025. The deal will mean that decisions can be taken in Norfolk, for Norfolk.

The full council agreed the following recommendations:

Council:

- Recognises the work carried out during 2023 to consult with the public, inform Members and prepare plans in relation to the 'in-principle' County Deal brought to Council in January this year

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- Commends the work undertaken by the Leader and Officers to secure additional benefits for the Norfolk County Deal and resolves that the Deal should be accepted
- Agrees that the election for the Directly Elected Leader should be held alongside the county council elections in May 2025 to enable the widest possible engagement with the electorate
- Agrees that the resolution adopting the new governance arrangements should be brought to the Full Council meeting on 23 July 2024 to facilitate that election date.

Households given free DIY waste for small projects.

Norfolk residents will be able to dispose of small amounts of DIY waste at Norfolk's Recycling Centres free of charge from 31 December following changes made by Norfolk County Council.

The change applies to small-scale projects carried out by householders on their own home, allowing them to bring a maximum 100 litres (must fit into 2 x 50l bags) for free or one single item (maximum size of 200cm x 70cm x 75cm). Each household is allowed four free visits with DIY waste every four weeks. Anything beyond this will still be charged at normal rates.

The change in policy follows Government abolishing charges for the disposal of limited amounts and types of DIY waste at recycling centres across the UK.

Prior to 31 December, customers with DIY-type construction and demolition waste will continue to be directed to the 'Pay as you throw service' which is available at all centres.

Traders must continue to pay for DIY waste.

For more information visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/DIYwaste

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