



Latest update on events from your County Councillor Tom FitzPatrick

Fakenham Town Council

24th April 2024

County update

Norfolk County Council awarded foster friendly employer status

Norfolk County Council has recently secured Foster Friendly Employer accreditation by the Fostering Network, which helps organisations to actively support fostering, and in particular, foster carer employees. The Council has implemented a policy to make a real difference to their employees who foster, and to support others in becoming approved foster carers themselves.

Foster carers make an enormous contribution to our ambition for every child and young person in Norfolk to flourish, providing safe and nurturing family homes for vulnerable youngsters who have had the most difficult start in life.

It's an incredible job and we are always looking to recruit more foster carers. Find out more about becoming a foster carer in Norfolk on the County Council website.

Government and Health updates

Tobacco and Vapes Bill update

On 16 April 2024 MPs backed a plan to ban anyone born after 2009 from buying cigarettes.

The Tobacco and Vapes Bill would make it an offence to sell tobacco products to anyone born after 1 January 2009 - children aged 15 or younger today. Smoking itself would not be criminalised and anyone who can legally buy tobacco today will not be prevented from doing so in the future by the legislation.

There are still several more steps needed before the bill becomes law, such as votes in the House of Lords, but it is possible that the bill could become law before the general election, expected in the second half of 2024.

- The government says that **smoking is responsible for around 80,000 deaths annually, and is the UK's single biggest preventable killer, costing the NHS and economy an estimated £17 billion a year**

- far more than the £10 billion annual revenue from tobacco taxation.

The proposed bill also aims to make vapes less appealing to children, with new restrictions on flavours and packaging. Trading standards officers would get new powers to issue on-the-spot £100 fines to shops selling tobacco or vapes to children, with all the money raised going towards further enforcement.

Further information about the process and a link to the proposed bill is available on the parliamentary website.

New DfE group to examine ‘unacceptable profiteering’ in children’s social care

The Local Government Chronicle (LGC) has reported that on 16 April The Director General for families at the Department for Education (DfE) told attendees at the Association of Directors of Children’s Services reception that their former president Steve Crocker, will be chairing a new advisory group on the private sector’s involvement in the children’s social care market.

- The Director General said the DfE had a new focus on “unacceptable profiteering” in the residential care market. “The market isn’t functioning well and it needs looking at.”

The new group is expected to meet for the first time this week to develop proposals that DfE hope to consult upon later in the year.

Earlier this year LGC analysis of Department for Education data found local authorities spent £2.5bn on residential placements in 2022-23, £1.1bn more than 2018-19. More than two-fifths of that increase occurred in the last year.

Critical Imports Council launched to help secure resilience in supply chains

The Government has taken further action to help secure the UK’s supplies of critical goods, such as medicines and smartphone chips, with the launch of a new Critical Imports Council.

The council was launched on 17 April. It is made up of 23 industry leaders and brings together expertise from business, academia and government to advise on securing resilience in supply chains for items critical to the UK’s economic prosperity, national security and essential services.

It will work with government to tackle the supply challenges businesses face and develop real-life solutions. Meeting quarterly, they will collaborate on emerging supply chain risks and identify the support UK businesses need to reduce vulnerabilities in supply chains.

- Further information and membership of the Critical Imports Council is available on the government website. [Government ramps up work to secure supplies of medicines and smartphone chips - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-ramps-up-work-to-secure-supplies-of-medicines-and-smartphone-chips)

The Department for Business and Trade will also create a new online portal where businesses can report red tape or supply chain problems, allowing work to start on resolving the issues quickly.

These initiatives build on the Government's [Critical Imports and Supply Chains Strategy](#) published in January 2024.

Tom FitzPatrick

County Councillor for Fakenham Division

(Dunton, Fakenham Lancaster North & South, Helhoughton, Hempton with Pudding North & Testerton, Raynham and Tattersett)

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