

Rule Your Council

The Green Party's residents' guide to influencing decisions at City Hall



In the Green Party we strongly believe in real democracy and think every resident should have the tools and knowledge to be able to influence local policy making and decisions.

Democracy isn't just about elections. In this guide we aim to tell you about some of the more direct ways you can influence decisions that affect you.

Your Green Party councillors are always looking at ways of improving the direct engagement you have with city council decisions. More detail overleaf.

If you want to influence, challenge or comment on council policies or decisions, here are some ways to do it

1) Contact the council directly:

If you have any concerns or comments it is good to let the council know directly, sometimes they can clarify a situation and deal with your concerns. You can contact the council via phone (**0344 980 3333**), email (**info@norwich.gov.uk**) on facebook or twitter (**@NorwichCC**).

2) Contact your councillor:

If in doubt, contact your councillor for advice on how to raise issues with the council. Between them they have a vast amount of experience in local policies and will always be able to point you in the right direction and help you.



Top Tip: You can find contact details for your local councillors in our regular newsletters or online at www.norwich.gov.uk.

3) Contact the portfolio holder:

Since Norwich City Council works using a cabinet system, a lot of policy decisions are made by only seven Labour councillors.

Each of these has an area of council activity that they are responsible for - their portfolio.

You can find names and contact details of each cabinet member on the Norwich City Council website (**www.norwich.gov.uk**) or by asking your local councillors.

Top Tip: Copy one or more of your local Green Party councillors into this email or send them a copy of the letter.



4) Ask a question in cabinet or full council:

Most months the full council meets to debate local policy issues and make decisions.

Near the beginning of the meeting, questions from the public are received and answered. This is a chance to get a public response to an issue you are concerned about.

All city councillors as well as the press will hear your question and the cabinet member's response.

Questions must be submitted a minimum of three full working days in advance of the council meeting. For more information and to submit a question call the council and ask for the democratic services team.

5) Raise a topic for scrutiny:

The cross-party scrutiny committee monitors how well services that the council delivers are doing, and looks at broader policy strategies, finance and other issues brought to its attention.

If you think a certain service, policy or strategy needs to be reviewed you can suggest it as a topic for the scrutiny work programme. Once a topic is approved to be on the work programme, a report will have to be produced, outside voices be heard and a whole group of councillors from all parties will look at the issue closely.

If you would like to suggest a topic to scrutiny, ask for advice from your local councillor.

The date, time and agenda for all council meetings can be found online on the committees pages of the council's website. Meetings are open to the public, so you can always come along and listen.



Reporting Issues in your local area

The City Council have made it easy to report common problems online. Visit the Norwich City Council website if you are having a problem with any of the following:

- Missed bin collections and other waste and recycling issues
- Blocked gullies
- Dog related issues
- Fly-tipping or abandoned vehicles
- Graffiti or Fly-posting
- Potholes, road or street lighting issues
- Anti-social behaviour

There are links to the full list of "Tell Us About It" forms on the front page of the City Council website at www.norwich.gov.uk.

Although an acknowledgement is always sent to confirm receipt of reports received through the website, the council often doesn't send a response as all service requests should be picked up and actioned.

If the issue doesn't get resolved, call the council's enquiries telephone no **0344 980 3333** and leave a message or hold to speak to an advisor.

If that doesn't work, get in contact with one of your councillors.

If you are a City Council tenant or leaseholder, you can also use the website to report maintenance issues.

Consultations

The council already seeks your opinions on many topics about the development of local policies. This is often done through consultations, which you can find on the council's website. Sometimes consultation events are also held at local community centres or at City Hall.

We have often found that the questions asked in these consultations are misleading, the wording not clear and the content does not always relate well to the proposed policy.

Still, it is a way to voice your opinion and we encourage residents to use it.

Top Tip: Use comments boxes to write a more detailed opinion or to make comments about the survey itself and what is missing.

Planning

Most new developments require planning permission before going ahead and you can have your say by making comments in the consultation period.

You can use the planning website, <http://planning.norwich.gov.uk> to view applications, appeal and enforcement case documentation and it also allows registered users to track applications (to receive automatic email updates of progress), make comments, save searches and more. If you find technology challenging you can still inspect plans at the planning department in City Hall.

You can make comments by using the online form; emailing planning@norwich.gov.uk or writing to:

Planning Services
Norwich City Council
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH

Our vision of a more democratic Norwich

"Politics must change if we want society to change. When people own the political process, real progress can happen. We want to see political debates motivated by cooperation on common aims and respectfulness in areas of disagreement."
2015 Local Election Manifesto

We've worked with council officers to improve the wording of their consultations, called on the cabinet members to involve the public more in strategic decisions and be more open to change plans based on the views of the public.

We would like to see a constant feedback process between the council and the citizens of Norwich and for everyone to feel as though they have the opportunity to influence decisions made on their behalf by the city council.



Licensing

The council licenses premises such as places that sell alcohol and late night refreshments (pubs, clubs, take aways).

When any of these premises wants to open or change their opening hours, a licence application is made which can be viewed on the council website (look for

links to "licence applications received").

Anyone can comment on the application. If you want to object to a new licence it is best to seek advice from one of your councillors; they will be able to help you, as objections have to address the legal licensing objectives.

