

Norfolk County Councillor Report from Cllr Julie Costley for Parish Councils of:

Docking, Sedgeford, Heacham, Snettisham, The Birchams, The Rudhams

September 2026

The Crisis and Resilience Service (CRS) is here to support Norfolk residents when money is tight. With families preparing for the new school year, the Crisis and Resilience Service can help with essential clothing costs, including school uniform, where households are facing financial hardship. To support this, we are running a bespoke promotion to raise awareness of school uniform and other financial and holistic support available and encourage eligible families to apply.

Funding: The School Uniform promotion and budget of £1m is funded via the government funded Crisis and Resilience Fund – of which CRS has a £6m budget for 2026/27.

Why this matters now: Back-to-school costs can place additional pressure on household budgets, particularly for families already managing low income, benefit changes, debt, food or energy costs. CRS can provide targeted support to help residents manage immediate financial pressures and improve resilience.

Who may be eligible: Support is for Norfolk residents aged 16 or over who can demonstrate they are in financial hardship and are claiming benefits or working on a low income with minimal disposable income. An email has been sent to parents/carers in receipt of Free School Meals.

What support may be available: CRS can help with essential clothing costs, including school uniform, clothing and shoes. Awards are based on assessed need and the evidence provided as part of the application. Information is also provided on wider financial and holistic support available.

How to apply: www.norfolk.gov.uk/CRS for the full CRS Support, or www.norfolk.gov.uk/uniform for uniform support and resilience only. Those digitally excluded can apply via the NCC Customer Contact Centre 0344 800 8020.

Norfolk County Council terminates £6.3 million contract

On 27 August the Deputy Leader, Cllr Robin Hunter-Clarke took the decision to give notice to terminate Norfolk County Council's £6.3m contract with Inner Circle Consultancy.

Cllr Hunter-Clarke said *"This contract should never have been signed by the previous administration. There was no scrutiny of it at the time and after discussion with officers it is clear to me that it is a waste of public money to continue with this type of contract. At a time when residents expect every pound of public money to be spent wisely, we must ensure we do just that."*

I am not prepared to tolerate a system where consultants are paid vast sums, taxpayers pick up the bill for lunches and hospitality, and yet the pace of delivery falls well short of what Norfolk deserves. Yes we are challenging LGR legally but we must be prepared for all eventualities. I have instructed officers that we must get a firm grip on this project immediately. Norfolk's residents expect competent leadership, sound financial management and real progress - not costly meetings.

Local Government Reorganisation is too important to be driven by external consultants who represent poor value for money. We have talented officers within Norfolk County Council, and I have every confidence that, with the right leadership and clear direction, we can deliver this programme. This decision is about restoring accountability, protecting taxpayers' money and ensuring every pound spent delivers value for the people of Norfolk. The days of signing multi-million-pound consultancy contracts with little to show for it are over. We were elected to change the culture at County Hall, and that is exactly what we are doing."

Police & Crime Commissioner Norfolk

On 16 July Colin Sutton was elected Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner. One of his first tasks will be to consult the public, partners and Norfolk Constabulary on a new Police and Crime Plan. More information about the PCC is available [here](#). The PCC is scrutinised by Norfolk's Police and Crime Panel, with more information [here](#).

Dennis Bacon named as preferred appointment for chief executive

Following a recruitment process that began in early July, Norfolk County Council has announced Dennis Bacon as its preferred appointment for chief executive. The appointment is subject to normal pre-employment checks and was approved at a full council meeting on 14 August.

Changes to fridge and freezer collections due to national capacity issues

A national shortage of specialist recycling and treatment capacity is affecting fridge and freezer collections across the UK. From 6 August, Norfolk County Council will only accept unwanted fridges, freezers and other cooling appliances at the county's largest recycling centres. Full details of the affected sites and what is accepted are available here: [Changes to fridge and freezer collections at Norfolk's recycling centres](#).

Heritage Open Days in Norfolk, 11–20 September

The festival gives residents and visitors the opportunity to explore buildings, historic places and cultural sites across Norfolk, including places that are not usually open to the public.

The Forum Trust funds the coordination and promotion of Heritage Open Days (HODs) in Norfolk, and the programme is delivered through collaboration between hundreds of venues, organisers, community partners and volunteers.

The printed Norfolk listings brochure for 2026 is now available at venues across the county, including The Forum, Norfolk libraries and museums. All the events are free. Some have limited capacity and must be booked in advance. There are also almost 200 drop-in events that do not require booking.

The free open days and activities include several events at Norfolk Museums. Norwich Castle will be taking part on 19 September - this event must be booked in advance. Further information, brochures and online booking are available on the HOD pages link [Everything you need to know](#).

Reuse shops raise for £32,000 for charity

Nelson's Journey, a local charity which supports children and young people in Norfolk who've experienced the death of a significant person, has recently been presented with a cheque for £32,000 raised through donations from Norfolk County Council's Reuse Shops.

Housed in 14 of Norfolk County Council's recycling centres, Reuse Shops welcome donations of second-hand items and sell these at bargain prices. The shops play an important role in cutting waste and last year they stopped 1,394 tonnes of reusable items being thrown away.

Income generated via the Reuse Shops helps to offset the cost of providing the recycling centre service. Staff across Norfolk's Reuse Shops then nominate and vote for a local charity to benefit from a partnership which sees them receive a share of the proceeds from the shop's sales. To date, the Reuse Shops have raised over £155,000 for local charities including Big C Cancer Charity, East Anglian Air Ambulance and Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Further information about reuse shops, including their locations, is available [here](#).

Driver and motorcycle rider safety in Norfolk

The Norfolk Road Safety Partnership has launched *We share the road. We share the responsibility*, a countywide campaign encouraging drivers and motorcyclists to take simple steps to reduce serious and fatal collisions.

The campaign highlights that many collisions happen in good conditions, on dry roads and in daylight, with risk often linked to decisions, observation and responses to hazards. Key messages include: be seen, look twice, slow down and stay focused. The campaign is informed by a survey of more than 1,200 riders across the Eastern region and promotes continued rider learning, awareness of hazards and safer decision-making, particularly at junctions.

Norfolk residents can book the Hugger motorcycle training course at half price for sessions between August and October 2026. Further information about the campaign, including safety advice and details of advanced driver and rider courses, is available [here](#). Further information about Norfolk's road safety partnership is available [here](#).

Flu Vaccinations - NHS Norfolk & Suffolk Integrated Care Board

The national booking system is open for eligible adults to pre-book a flu vaccination appointment at a local community pharmacy. Pregnant women and some other eligible groups can receive their vaccination from 1 September, while most eligible adults will be vaccinated from 1 October.

From September, local NHS services will contact eligible residents through GP practices, the NHS App or by letter. Eligible adults do not need to wait for an invitation before booking through the national system. Residents can check eligibility and book via the [NHS flu vaccine webpage](#).

Norfolk's partnership with Lviv: visit by Ukrainian medical team

Norfolk County Council has reiterated its support for Ukraine following a visit from senior figures from Danylo Halytsky Lviv National Medical University.

The delegation undertook placements with departments at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, met with the University of East Anglia, and were hosted at County Hall by Council Leader Cllr David Bick and Vice-Chairman Cllr Mike Westman.

The visit forms part of a three-year partnership between the institutions, building on the Memorandum of Understanding between Norfolk County Council and the Lviv Regional Military Administration. Further details are available in the [county council press release](#).

Local Government East – wastewater capacity and housing growth issues

A [new report from Local Government East](#) warns that wastewater infrastructure is becoming a significant barrier to housing delivery across the East of England.

For Norfolk, this matters because wastewater capacity constraints can affect whether planned homes, local infrastructure and economic growth can be delivered in the right places and at the right time. The report highlights concerns that treatment works and sewerage networks are reaching capacity in parts of the region, creating uncertainty for communities, councils, developers and those preparing or responding to Local Plans.

Local Government East calls on Government to accelerate investment in wastewater infrastructure, prioritise schemes that unlock housing and economic growth, strengthen collaboration between councils, regulators and water companies, and ensure that environmental improvements and housing growth are planned together.

Councillors may wish to raise local examples and evidence of where wastewater capacity is affecting development, and to support Local Government East's call to action. The report is also timely, as it raises issues relevant to recent Government changes to the National Planning Framework and the Environment Agency's consultation outcome related to water management issues as outlined below.

Trial of new pothole repair machine

Norfolk County Council will trial an innovative pothole repair machine as part of ongoing work to improve road maintenance and keep Norfolk's highways in the best possible condition. The trial will take place during the first week of September on planned repairs in South Norfolk.

The machine and operator are being provided at no cost to the Council for this short trial. If this short trial is successful, a longer-term trial will be arranged.

Norfolk Fire & Rescue service has recently celebrated one of North Norfolk's community heroes who has reached a major milestone of 50 years as a firefighter at Holt Fire Station.

Tony Pointer joined the service aged 19, and for the last 31 years has been in charge at the station in his role as Watch Manager for Holt. It's estimated that he has attended over 7,000 incidents in his 50 years as a firefighter.

As fire crews continue to deal with outdoor fires, Norfolk residents are urged to continue to take extra care when out and about this summer to cut the risk of avoidable fires.

Progress of the new extra care scheme in South Wootton

The new South Wootton Extra Care scheme has been named Saltern View, following a competition. The name reflects the village's medieval salt-making history.

When complete, Housing 21's Extra Care scheme will provide 77 self-contained social rent apartments for local people aged over 55, each with a balcony or patio. Residents will be able to live independently, with a 24/7 on-site care team if needed. Facilities will include a restaurant, lounge, hair salon, laundry, guest room, assisted bathroom, mobility scooter store, landscaped gardens and parking.

The scheme supports the County Council's aim to help people remain independent, reduce avoidable residential care admissions and provide accessible housing within local communities.

New social homes for Norwich

Work has started on a major east Norwich scheme to deliver 127 new social rent homes on a former County Council brownfield site, with investment of up to £40 million.

The scheme will increase affordable housing, provide specialist accommodation, make use of brownfield land and support better value adult social care. It includes 77 homes for people aged 55 and over eligible for care and support, 22 supported living homes for adults with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and autistic people, and 28 family homes.

The older people's housing will include 54 one-bedroom and 23 two-bedroom wheelchair-accessible apartments, with shared facilities including a café, hairdresser, spa bathroom, guest suite and communal garden. Supported living will comprise 12 apartments and 10 bungalows, with on-site support from Places for People.

Norfolk County Council is contributing £5.5 million through its Independent Living and Supported Living capital programmes. Places for People and Homes England will fund the remainder. The scheme is expected to save around £1.2 million a year by reducing demand for residential care.

Progress of the new extra care scheme in Thorpe St Andrew

A ground-breaking ceremony has taken place to mark the start of work on a new Extra Care scheme in Thorpe St Andrew. Once complete, the scheme will provide 87 self-contained apartments for social rent to local people over the age of 55.

The development is being delivered with grant funding from Homes England and Norfolk County Council. Residents will have the assurance of an on-site care team who will be available 24/7, allowing them to live independently but with care and support on-hand if they need it. Facilities will include a restaurant, residents' lounge, hair salon, laundry room, guest room, assisted bathroom, mobility scooter store, landscaped gardens and on-site parking.

The initiative demonstrates Norfolk County Council's ongoing commitment to help residents live as independently as possible, avoid unnecessary residential care home admissions, and provide accessible housing that supports people in their communities.

National Updates:

Homelessness in county and rural areas - County Councils Network analysis

New [County Councils Network \(CCN\) analysis](#) highlights a sharp rise in homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation in county and rural areas. It finds that more than 23,000 children were living in temporary accommodation in March 2026, while council spending on temporary accommodation more than tripled between 2019/20 and 2024/25.

CCN says rising demand, higher accommodation costs and a shortage of affordable housing are putting growing pressures on councils. It is calling on the Government to ensure that homelessness funding and affordable housing investment meet the needs of county and rural areas, as well as urban areas.

CCN is thus concerned that almost all the first £10 billion recently allocated through the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (outlined below), will go to England's major cities rather than county and rural areas.

Social and Affordable Homes Programme

The Prime Minister and Secretary of State Angela Rayner [have announced](#) nearly £10 billion for the first wave of the Government's Social and Affordable Homes Programme, to support more council, social and affordable homes across England.

More than £2 billion is expected to be invested in mayoral areas outside London, with Homes England administering the programme (outside London). The funding is expected to help to cut the number of families in temporary accommodation, delivering more than 70,000 homes. The funding will be allocated to 33 Strategic Partners, including councils and housing associations. For partners delivering through the Programme, the Government is asking providers to consider what they can do to support young people into employment.

This is the first stage of the £39 billion, ten-year programme. At least 60% of homes delivered through the programme are expected to be for Social Rent. More than £16 billion remains to be allocated outside London.

Support for Care leavers

A government-commissioned review into early deaths among care leavers has found that young people face a sharp reduction in support at age 18, leaving some isolated and without a reliable safety net. The [review](#), led by Ashley John-Baptiste and Clare Chamberlain, was commissioned after 91 care leaver deaths were notified in 2024/25.

Its central finding is that many young people leaving care are profoundly isolated. While services may respond to a young person's wish for their own place, independence can bring unexpected loneliness, with too few trusted adults close enough to notice when things go wrong. The report identifies three priorities for change: better preparation for adulthood, reducing the drop in help at 18, and strengthening the skills of the workforce supporting care leavers.

In response, the [Government says it is](#) rolling out connected housing options for care leavers, starting with £25 million this year, to increase access to homes that provide community and connection rather than inappropriate or isolating accommodation.

Updated DBS Guidance

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has [announced](#) its updated guidance for employers and organisations using the DBS Update Service. They say that it provides clearer information on how the service works, what a status check shows, the limitations of the service and how it can support safer recruitment and safer employment practices. The full updated guidance for employers is available at [DBS Update Service: employer guide - GOV.UK](#).

Air pollution warnings – new alert system

The Government has launched a free text message and email alert system to inform people about high levels of air pollution in their local areas. Users can opt to monitor specific locations, such as their home or workplace, and receive direct alerts when pollution levels are elevated. It aims to help individuals, especially those with health conditions, take practical steps to reduce their exposure to harmful air pollutants. People can sign up at [Check air quality - GOV.UK](#)

I continue to work on a range of local issues raised by residents and I can be contacted directly at: Julie.Costley.Cllr@norfolk.gov.uk

Committees/Outside Bodies:

Chair of Planning (Regulatory) Committee
Planning & Highways Delegations Committee
Eastern Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority
Norfolk Coast (Protected Landscape) Partnership Group
LGA Coastal Special Interest Group