

**Norfolk County Councillor Report from Cllr Julie Costley
for Parish Councils of:
Docking, Sedgeford, Heacham, Snettisham, The Birchams, The Rudhams**

5th October 2026

Budget proposals for 2027/28

Norfolk County Council has published initial 2027-28 budget proposals to address a projected £35.9m gap and growing service demand. Consultation will take place on relevant proposals, with final decisions due in February 2027. The council has identified £32.3m of savings and efficiencies, but further action is needed to close the remaining gap as demand for services continues to grow.

Key proposals include:

- Earlier intervention and neighbourhood support to reduce demand for adult social care
- More support for children to remain within or return to family networks, alongside expanded family help services
- Higher income from infrastructure fees and charges

Cabinet will consider the proposals on 5 October, and is asked to agree to begin public consultations on relevant elements before final decisions are made. The plans will be reviewed when government funding is confirmed and the County Council will make final budget and council tax decisions in February 2027. Full details are available in the Cabinet papers [2027-28 budget proposals](#).

Docking Recycling Centre

The proposed savings, published on 25 September, included details of a proposal to close Docking recycling centre. There is a great strength of support for this service both in Docking and amongst the neighbouring parishes. I have been representing residents' views on this and I am pleased to report that at the Cabinet Meeting this morning, 5th October, the proposal was formally removed from the list of proposed savings. This means Docking recycling centre will remain open.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) withdrawn for Norfolk

Deputy Leader of NCC, Cllr Robin Hunter-Clarke informed the Strategic and Corporate select committee (16 September) that the Government had withdrawn its decision to have three unitary councils in Norfolk. All work on the programme has been stopped and our focus now is where it belongs - delivering for residents and delivering devolution, to give Norfolk a stronger voice and greater control over its future.

NCC has formally asked the government to reimburse the costs it incurred in preparation work. These are around £1.2m. The Government's decision letter of 7 September, to Council Leaders in LGR areas is here [Local government reorganisation: programme review and decisions withdrawal letter to council leaders - GOV.UK](#)

Cabinet sets out new priorities for the County Council

Norfolk County Council's cabinet has pledged to secure value for money for residents, in its first report on the issues facing the authority and how to tackle them. A report to cabinet outlines what has been discovered during the administration's first 100 days and sets out its priorities for

the next 18 months. The report recognises that the council has committed staff and valued services but identifies a range of issues that need to be tackled. These include:

- Opportunities to improve productivity
- A need for strong grip and accountability
- Significant financial and service pressures
- The need for greater investment and support to boost economic growth
- Cost and uncertainty arising from local government reorganisation and other national changes that could disrupt services in Norfolk

Standing Up for Norfolk - a new four year strategy for Norfolk

Standing Up for Norfolk has now been formally adopted by Norfolk County Council as the new four year strategy. Covering the period from 2026 to 2030, the strategy will shape how the council works and what it delivers for Norfolk. It also sets out five new priorities for the County Council:

- Putting Norfolk's residents first
- Growing Norfolk's economy
- Keeping Norfolk moving
- Running an efficiency and effective council
- Building stronger Norfolk communities and places

Full details and a copy of the strategy are available in the papers taken to the full council meeting on 22 September - available [here](#). You can [read the reports](#) and you can [watch the meeting, live or afterwards](#).

Record-breaking month for fire and rescue incidents in Norfolk

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service attended 1,295 incidents in August 2026, making it the busiest month in the history of the service. The increase was largely driven by hot, dry weather, with this summer declared the hottest on record and five heatwaves affecting Norfolk. Significant incidents included fires at Mousehold Heath, Kenninghall, Bryant's Heath, Kelling Heath, Plumstead Road East and Thomas Bullock CE Primary Academy. Ceri Sumner, Chief Fire Officer, praised staff across the service for maintaining cover and keeping communities safe during an exceptionally demanding summer.

How to report shops suspected to be selling illicit tobacco and vapes

Norfolk County Council's trading standards team has had some great successes recently in tackling the trade of illicit tobacco and cigarettes on high streets throughout the county, particularly in Great Yarmouth. These shops are often fronts for organised criminal networks. Our operations are intelligence-led, meaning that businesses are targeted for inspections based on information received - often from the public. How to report a concern:

For anyone with information about illegal tobacco, cigarette and vape sales:

- Contact Citizens Advice by calling 0808 223 1133
- Report it anonymously online at [Report a concern about the sale of illicit tobacco or cigarettes](#)

For anyone being coerced into preparing, distributing or selling illegal tobacco:

- Report it to HMRC online at <https://www.gov.uk/report-tax-fraud> or by contacting the HMRC Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887

If you believe someone is a victim of modern slavery or exploitation rather than simply reporting fraud, the Modern Slavery Helpline (0800 0121 700) can also provide support and advice

The Big Conversation on Care

The independent Casey Commission launched The Big Conversation on Care, a national public conversation inviting people across England to share their views and experiences to help shape the future of adult social care. The Commission described this as the most ambitious public conversation on care in a generation, giving the public a direct opportunity to influence future reforms. In Norfolk, this aligns closely with our ongoing transformation of Adult Social Services. We are working to help people live their best life by focusing on strengths, prevention, stronger relationships and joined-up support in communities. These changes are rooted in listening to residents and building services around what matters most to them.

Residents can now vote on their preferred proposals that have been suggested, helping to identify popular suggestions that receive broad support from the population and workforce. You can find out more and vote at [The Big Conversation on Care](#).

Free self-service health checks in Norfolk

Residents across Norfolk are encouraged to take charge of their health with the launch of six digital health stations offering free, quick and easy health assessments in community locations across the county. A mobile health station will also visit libraries and events across the county.

The new self-service stations, provided by Norfolk County Council's Public Health team, allow people to check key health indicators, including blood pressure, heart rate, body mass index (BMI), alcohol consumption, physical activity levels and heart age, in under five minutes. Users receive instant results, along with personalised advice and signposting to local support services.

The health stations are located at:

- Tesco Superstore, Kilverstone, Thetford
- ASDA, Great Yarmouth
- Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre, Gorleston
- King's Lynn Library
- Victory Swim and Fitness Centre, North Walsham

Scam alert - letters claiming to be from Norfolk County Council

A letter claiming to be from 'Norfolk County Council' is being circulated. It states that it is informing the recipient about 'changes to Council Tax payments'. The letter is a scam. Norfolk County Council is not responsible for collecting Council Tax payments in Norfolk. The letter also includes a QR code that directs recipients to a fraudulent website and attempts to take payments.

Trading Standards is investigating and its advice is to be wary of claims made in unexpected letters. If you, or anyone you know, receives this or a similar letter claiming to be from Norfolk County Council about Council Tax payments, please ignore it and do not scan the QR code.

Scam letters can also be reported to Trading Standards through its partner, the Citizens Advice consumer helpline, on freephone 0808 223 1133. Any questions about Council Tax should be raised directly with the relevant district council.

Free weight management support for Adults

Norfolk adults who would like support to lose weight and improve their health are being encouraged to find out if they are eligible for free weight management services funded by Norfolk County Council. Being overweight or obese can increase the risk of developing several long-term health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and some cancers. In Norfolk, around 65% of adults are classed as overweight or obese.

To help people achieve and maintain a healthier weight, Public Health Norfolk commissions two free programmes: Slimming World and Your Health Norfolk. Eligible residents can access weekly group support sessions that provide practical advice, encouragement and tools to help them make sustainable lifestyle changes. Further details and links are available in the county council news release [here](#). For those not meeting the eligibility criteria there are other useful tools, tips and support available through the County Council's Ready to Change web pages - www.readytochange.co.uk/

Children's services team selected by the Government to share expertise

Norfolk County Council's outstanding Children's Services team has been selected by the Government to share its expertise nationally and help improve social care at other councils.

Norfolk is one of eight councils and one trust chosen by the Department for Education for the second phase of its Children's Social Care Improvement Team programme. The selection reflects the council's progress over the past decade and follows Norfolk's outstanding Ofsted rating earlier this year. Norfolk will be partnered with an underperforming local authority, providing practical, sustainable peer support for up to two years. The programme is fully funded by the Department for Education, which will pay Norfolk for its contribution.

Consultation on tackling antisocial driving on Britannia Road, Norwich

Norfolk County Council has launched a consultation on measures to address longstanding concerns about antisocial driving and gatherings on Britannia Road, Norwich. Working with Norwich City Council and Norfolk Constabulary, the County Council is consulting as the highway authority on traffic management options for Britannia Road and Vincent Road.

Options include speed humps, cushions or chicanes, one-way restrictions, or closing the road to motorised through traffic. Details of all options and frequently asked questions are available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/britanniaroad The deadline for comments is Sunday 11 October.

Hethel road scheme launched on 18 September

A parade of vehicles spanning decades of innovation officially launched a new spine road and roundabout at Hethel designed to unlock the economic potential of the area and support the region's advanced manufacturing and engineering sector.

The new roundabout has been created on the B1135 Wymondham Road, the north arm of which will provide a spine road access through land allocated for employment in the Greater Norwich Local Development Plan and join Potash Lane northeast of Hethel Engineering Centre (HEC), linking with Lotus Cars. The scheme also includes local pedestrian and cycling facilities to promote active travel. Funding has been provided by the Greater Norwich Growth Board, Norfolk County Council, and South Norfolk Council. Further details are available in the county council's new release [here](#).

Helping to improve Norfolk's recycling service

Norfolk County Council's annual Recycling Centre Survey is now open until 18 October 2026. It seeks views from both users and non-users to inform future improvements to the service. Feedback from the previous survey led to practical changes, including improved booking arrangements for Blue Badge holders, vape recycling at every site, and the addition of coffee pod recycling and acceptance of UPVC windows and doors at the county's seven main centres.

The council's 19 Recycling Centres handled almost 56,000 tonnes of household waste last year, with around three quarters recycled or reused. Responses from people who do not currently use a Recycling Centre are particularly valuable, as they can help the council understand barriers, unmet needs and opportunities to make the service more accessible. The survey link is here www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/RecyclingCentres2026/

County Hall Jaguar to be temporarily removed for restoration

The Jaguar aircraft, known as the "Spirit of Coltishall" will soon be temporarily removed from its place outside County Hall. Scaffolding has recently been erected prior to its removal for restoration by RAF Coltishall Heritage Centre volunteers. The work is expected to take a number of months with the Jaguar returning to County Hall next year. The restoration will be funded by the income generated through matchday parking at County Hall, which is set aside for maintenance and improvement works across the site. Further details are available in the county council's news release [here](#).

Improving roads and tackling potholes

Norfolk County Council is trialling Roadmender, an innovative repair system designed to improve local roads, reduce disruption and provide better value for taxpayers. The technology supports preventative maintenance by repairing cracks and early deterioration before potholes develop. Rather than digging out and replacing sections of road, repair material is applied directly to damaged areas, enabling quicker repairs with less waste. The trial will help assess whether the approach can deliver longer-lasting, more sustainable repairs across Norfolk's highway network.

Youth support services support for young people over the summer holidays

Nearly 1,700 young people benefited from County Council youth support activities over the summer, helping them stay safe, build relationships and grow in confidence. More than 600 joined the new Norwich Chill on the Hill sessions, enjoying activities including karaoke, arts and

crafts, gaming and quizzes. Weekly sessions also took place in Great Yarmouth, Thetford, King's Lynn and Norwich.

Young people receiving targeted support, including those at risk of exploitation or social exclusion, reported greater confidence, pride and aspirations for education, training and employment. The summer programme was supported with funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The OPCC provides £175,000 of funding to Norfolk County Council to support the work of its youth team, with £5,000 used to help run the summer programme.

New Independent living scheme officially opened in Hunstanton

A £2.9 million Norfolk County Council investment has helped deliver 61 affordable-rent apartments as part of the council's transformation plan to deliver improved care and better long-term value for taxpayers. Lavender View in Hunstanton provides much-needed affordable housing and care for people over 55, helping them live independently in their community for longer. Residents will benefit from safe, modern homes, greater independence and security, while staying connected to their community.

Opened on 23 September, the scheme offers one and two-bedroom apartments with on-site care and support when needed. Delivered with Places for People, Homes England, Lovell Later Living, Lovell Partnerships, Langtry Langton Architects and Radis Community Care, it meets growing demand in west Norfolk.

National Updates

Government announces draft Environment Delivery Plan for Norfolk

The Government has [announced a draft Environmental Delivery Plan](#) (EDP) that could unlock up to 15,780 new homes in Norfolk and fund improvements to rivers, wetlands and wildlife habitats. Natural England drafted the plan under the Nature Restoration Fund.

It aims to unlock housing delayed by the need to protect rivers and wetlands from nutrient pollution. The government says that the Norfolk EDP will be the first test of their approach to winning public consent for housebuilding, and that the EDP has been developed with local authorities and partners to reflect local environmental priorities. It covers the River Wensum, Bure Broads and Marshes, and Yare Broads and Marshes catchments across much of central and eastern Norfolk. Developers would pay into a shared fund instead of arranging separate environmental measures for each site. Natural England would use the fund for larger projects to restore rivers, create wetlands and improve water quality.

The plan will also create new opportunities for farmers, landowners and private organisations to work with Natural England to deliver conservation measures to support nature recovery. The EDP is [open for consultation until 27 October 2026](#). Responses will inform the final plan submitted to the Secretary of State.

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee call for evidence – flooding

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has [launched a call for evidence on 'flooding emergency response'](#), as part of its long-term inquiry into climate adaptation and

emergency response. It will issue further calls for evidence on different topics within the broader inquiry in due course. The deadline for submission is 9 October 2026.

Common Ground Award - community grant funding

Community and voluntary organisations can apply for grants to improve local places and help bring people together. The Common Ground Award 2026 to 2027 will fund buildings, facilities, equipment and other long-term improvements for eligible voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in England.

Individual organisations can apply for between £20,000 and £50,000. In exceptional cases, applications of up to £100,000 may be considered where there is strong evidence of need and likely benefit. Groups of organisations applying together can seek between £100,000 and £250,000. Further details and information on how to apply are available in the [Government press release](#).

Grants to support community energy projects

Local authorities and community energy groups across the UK are being given new opportunities to develop their own renewable energy projects, following the [launch of a £30 million funding programme](#) from Great British Energy (GBE). The investment is the first tranche of a wider commitment of up to £1 billion. The initiative is designed to support more than 1,000 community and locally led clean energy schemes, ranging from solar panels on public buildings to village-owned wind farms and hydroelectric projects.

The funding includes the [GBE Community Fund \(£20 million\)](#), which is now open, and a new [GBE Partnerships Grant \(£5 million\)](#). Alongside funding specific local power projects, the Government will also set out further details this autumn on plans to offer community energy groups an ownership stake in renewable energy projects.

England's mayors to be given power to introduce tourist tax

Government plans to give elected mayors in England the power to introduce an overnight visitor levy, known as a tourist tax, on accommodation such as hotels, B&Bs and holiday lets. Local leaders would be able to choose whether to introduce the tax and how to spend the revenue raised. Angela Rayner MP and England's mayors were expected to discuss the proposal on 10 September, with further details to be announced in due course. Mayors would be required to set out by March 2028 how any revenue raised would be spent.

Growing Pressures in SEND

Schools and councils are reporting a significant surge in applications for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), as families seek to secure support before planned government reforms to the SEND system take effect. Projections suggest that demand could rise to almost one in ten children by 2029. Currently, one in 20 school-age children in England has an EHCP. School leaders are already reporting an extraordinary increase in assessment requests, with SEND staff reportedly working through school holidays to manage demand. Proposed reforms aim to provide earlier intervention and greater support within mainstream schools, while reserving EHCPs for children with the most complex needs from 2030 onwards.

The sharp rise in EHCP applications nationally reflects the challenges Norfolk is seeking to address through its SEND Inclusion Plans, which aim to strengthen support in mainstream settings and improve inclusive provision.

Chancellor 'Growth Speech'

The Chancellor, John Healey, set out the government's plans ahead of the Budget in his 'Growth Speech' on 7 September. Notably, The Chancellor reaffirmed the commitment to existing fiscal rules and to balancing day-to-day spending with revenue. Also stressed was the need to control government spending and reduce the burden of debt interest payments. It was suggested that economic growth would be key to achieving stronger public finances. The Chancellor also announced that a roadmap for fiscal devolution would be published at the Budget. Also proposed were greater business rates retention and a share of local income for mayoral authorities from 2028, arguing that local leaders are best placed to unlock regional growth opportunities. The full speech can be found [here](#).

New duty to support children placed in temporary accommodation

From 1 September 2026, councils have a new duty to notify schools, GP practices and health visiting services when a child is placed in temporary accommodation. The change, introduced through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, is intended to ensure that children do not lose access to education and health support when their housing circumstances change. The Government has provided almost £1 million in new burdens funding to support councils with implementation. The change will be particularly relevant to councils managing growing numbers of families in temporary accommodation.

Free school meals expansion comes into effect

New guidance for councils and schools has been published as the expansion of free school meals begins from September 2026. The Government's reforms extend eligibility to children in households receiving Universal Credit, alongside the wider rollout of breakfast clubs. The Department for Education has updated its guidance for local authorities, schools, academies and free schools, with councils responsible for important aspects of implementation and funding.

Government consults on new planning powers for mayors

The Government has launched a six-week consultation on giving mayors in England greater powers over strategic planning applications. Proposed powers would allow mayors to "call in" certain major planning applications and potentially direct councils to approve or refuse them.

The proposals would initially apply to developments such as schemes involving more than 150 homes, more than 15,000 square metres of commercial space, or buildings over 30 metres. The Government wants the new powers in place by early 2027.

Rural councils' financial pressures debated in Parliament

A Westminster Hall debate on Government support for rural upper-tier local authorities took place on 2 September. The debate focused on the additional pressures faced by rural county

councils, including the cost of providing services across large geographic areas, lower population density and difficulties in achieving economies of scale.

Other areas highlighted include the costs of delivery associated with adult social care, SEND, school transport, highways and public transport. Concerns were also raised around rural areas facing weaker access to services, housing, digital connectivity and economic opportunities, creating additional barriers to growth.

Students to be offered new vocational GCSE subjects.

The Government has [announced new vocational GCSEs](#) and expanded work experience for 14 to 16-year-olds to strengthen routes from school into further study and employment. The qualifications will sit alongside academic GCSEs and eventually replace Technical Awards, with nationally set content and Ofqual-regulated assessment and grading. English, maths and science will remain part of every pupil's education.

Broader technical pathways are planned from September 2028, with the first vocational GCSEs potentially available from September 2029. Potential subjects include digital technology, creative media production, child development, construction, and business management and finance. The Department for Education says they will support progression to A Levels, T Levels and planned V Levels.

The Government is also launching a National Mission on Work Experience with the Good Growth Business Forum and other businesses. Employers are asked to provide 200,000 additional placements so all young people gain workplace experience between 14 and 16. Employers can pledge placements through their [local Careers Hub](#). Local leaders, employers, schools and colleges are expected to play a key role in deciding the subjects to reflect skills needs, and a Government consultation will be launched later in the year to help shape the new qualifications and get views from local leaders.

Public panel for independent commission on adult social care

Baroness Louise Casey's independent commission on adult social care is inviting people to join public panels as part of the Big Conversation on Care. From 21 September 2026, thousands of households across England have begun to receive letters inviting adults to register their interest in joining. Around 125 people will ultimately be selected to take part, bringing together people from different backgrounds and communities across England. Letters are being sent to addresses selected at random, and anyone aged 18 or over living at an invited address can register. The public panels are part of the [Big Conversation on Care](#) open to all. All residents can vote on their preferred proposals, helping to identify suggestions that receive broad support from the population and workforce.

Proposed new National Care Service

The Prime Minister has [announced a new settlement for older people](#): a state pension that rises every year, no personal care charges and a high-quality National Care Service to give peace of mind in later life. The new National Care Service will be introduced in phases as the savings

increase from adjusting the Triple Lock, and as workforce and provider capacity are built up. It will be fully funded.

Baroness Casey's independent Commission, informed by public deliberation, will recommend how the proposals should be implemented. Its report is due in summer 2027. It is noted that the proposed service will not cover bed and board, for which existing means-tested council contributions will remain. Councils will continue to exclude the value of a home from financial assessments where a partner or dependent relative lives there, and deferred payment agreements will remain available to help eligible people avoid having to sell their home during their lifetime to meet care costs.

Improving public health – new tax on vaping

The Government has [introduced a new Vaping Products Duty](#) on all vaping liquids supplied in the UK. The measure is intended to support public health objectives by helping to discourage youth vaping and reduce nicotine dependence, while maintaining a financial incentive for adult smokers to choose vaping over smoking, which remains more harmful.

Planning and Environment

Natural England's [new Operational Statement](#) focuses specialist planning advice on environmentally sensitive cases, with councils expected to determine more routine applications. For Norfolk, this may mean:

- Greater reliance on strategic approaches to nutrient neutrality, habitat protection and nature recovery.
- More influence for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy on growth decisions.
- Less detailed Natural England advice on routine planning applications.

Environment and coastal communities

The Marine Management Organisation's "Your Coast – Explore, Enjoy, Protect" campaign includes a [national call for evidence](#) on how recreational activities affect protected marine habitats and wildlife.

With major protected areas including The Wash and the North Norfolk Coast, Norfolk communities, the Government's call for evidence may therefore be of particular interest to local communities, marine users, conservation organisations and businesses that rely on a healthy coastal environment.

Homelessness prevention

The Government [has confirmed](#) that it will bring forward amendments to the Social Housing Bill. Additional measures are intended to help retain more social homes, strengthen homelessness prevention and ensure social housing is allocated to those who need it most. A new Duty to Collaborate will require public services to work more closely together to identify people at risk of homelessness and consider what action they can take within their existing responsibilities to help prevent homelessness.

Culture and communities

Culture is increasingly being recognised as a driver of community wellbeing, local pride and economic growth, with councils expected to play a stronger leadership role in shaping cultural opportunities for residents. The Local Government Association and partners have recently published a [National Cultural Framework](#) which argues that councils should play a greater strategic role in shaping cultural investment and services in their areas. The framework highlights culture's contribution to economic growth, health and wellbeing, community pride and stronger local identities.

The report says that local authorities are well placed to lead place-based cultural development through services such as libraries, heritage, arts, festivals and community spaces. It calls for clearer responsibilities, stronger local accountability and more place-based approaches to funding and investment.

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