13 SEPTEMBER 2026

Monthly Report for August 2026

ROBERT JAMIESON

County Councillor for Fakenham and The Raynhams Division

Norfolk County Council

GENERAL UPDATE

Following my last report in July I attended an NCC Full Council meeting, where the appointment of the new CEO was approved. As such, Dennis Bacon will soon commence work at NCC, and thus replace the former CEO Tom McCabe. This was a short meeting, with little else discussed.

Further to the above, due to a family bereavement and annual holiday, I did not attend any PC meetings, but the only one scheduled was at Fakenham TC. Despite the bereavement and holiday, I managed to keep on top of correspondence, and also drafted letters in connection with the Tattersett tyre mountain, and Link's decision in regards the banking hub in Fakenham town centre. More details of my community focused work and NCC focused updates are included below.

DIVISION SPECIFIC CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The table below includes all the capital works planned in the division for the 2026/27 financial year. I will continue to add updates in regards each scheme listed –

Location	Scheme	Designer / Contact	Updates
PCA017 BSIP Fakenham C550 Queen's Road car park CC50 Miller Walk/White Horse st car park	Improvement - Fakenham Travel Hub - Feasibility and concept designs	Rob Pratt	Deadline for response from owner of Millers Walk car park has now expired, despite repeated attempts to invoke such a response. This project will not go ahead now. Consideration being given to other bus service related improvements in town.
PHA069 Fakenham C590 Greenway Lane	Improvement - Signalised new crossing	Ben Hanlon	Programmed in for start of work 04/01/27. Safety audit ongoing. Preparing contractual and H&S documents for issue to Kier. Results from consultation appear majority positive. Preparing documentation for Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), to undergo statutory consultation ASAP.
PMC285 C575 Fakenham Bridge Street	Maintenance - Resurfacing (Renew the raised tegula block raised platform)	Bradley Shaw	Awaiting estimate from Norse. Following estimate docs will be completed and a date for installation will be arranged. Highways to escalate with Norse given the delay.
PR3873 Fakenham Rudham, Stile Lane	PR3873 Fakenham Rudham, Stile Lane Developer - S38 TRO 20mph zone on new housing development	Angeles Saiz-Zamora	Complete and in operation

PRZ325 Fakenham Sports Centre, Trap Lane	Developer - TRO amendment to existing waiting restrictions	Bimal Ranjit	During the preliminary consultation, we received an equal split of 50% objections and 50% support from residents. The legal team are preparing the draft Schedule and Notice for publication. During the formal consultation period, members of the public will still have the opportunity to submit comments or objections to the TRO. If everything progresses as planned and agreed, we will then have a two-year period within which to implement the TRO on site, if we elect to do so.
PKA012 Hempton B1146/C550	Improvement - New Roundabout Design & Construction	Tim Osborn	Paused, pending comprehensive review. Scope of review being finalised.
PLA604 Raynham Village Gateways	Parish Partnership - Replacement gateways to be funded by parish	Bradley Shaw	Still awaiting delivery once delivered Norse will install ASAP. Highways to escalate with Norse given the delay.
Fakenham Holt road service road	LMF - lack of signing to cycle path - add additional signs £2500		Complete
Fakenham Rudham style lane/greenway lane	LMF - speeding vehicles - Speed measuring strips at two locations. £1200		Complete

PARISH SPECIFIC CASEWORK

The following are cases, not in order of receipt or priority, that I have been dealing with during the month of August 2026 –

FAKENHAM TOWN

HGV's on Queens Road: Monitoring. No further update.

Norwich Street (parking): Still awaiting a response back from Highways / NPLAW ref. possibility of altering the existing TRO, or establishing if a new TRO is needed. A feasibility study will be needed. NNDC will need to fund this and the TRO, which could still be objected to. I am working with Cllr Vickers on this. I have recently chased for an update.

Speeding on Greenway Lane: Highways had advised that a feasibility study would be needed before any action could be undertaken. Prior speed monitoring on Greenway Lane demonstrated an average speed of 29.2mph, and a speed of 34mph at the 85th percentile, and thus Highways view was that no further action was justified at this time. Whilst I had closed this job out, I received further reports of perceived speeding from some local residents. In response, I contacted the Police who advised that they had conducted their own survey, and the data obtained did not breach the threshold for further intervention on their part.

Cllrs from FTC considered that the earlier Highways led speed monitoring had been done in the wrong place at the wrong time, I approached the Area Director from Highways who confirmed that former County Cllr Fitzpatrick had selected the survey locations based on where he had been advised the concerns were occurring by FTC and local residents. Furthermore, whilst Highways had become aware that road works were taking place at the time of the initial study the survey period was extended beyond the usual one-week monitoring period. The road works took place between 13 April and 22 April and, although the pneumatic tubes were already in place, Highways waited a further two weeks for traffic levels to return to normal before undertaking the main survey period between 4 May and 17 May. The dataset therefore consists of two weeks of monitoring, rather than the single week that would normally be undertaken.

Given all the speed monitoring data, and with a lack of accident history, Highways, being evidence led, deemed there not to be justification for further intervention at the current time. However, Highways would be supportive of further SAMS deployment closer to Holt Road, which I relayed to the Town Clerk. Also, since the SAMS owned and used by FTC do not have data capture functionality, I suggested that the Council may wish to consider an upgrade, and thus to collaborate with NCC on this via the newly refreshed Parish Partnership.

Speeding on Rudham Style Lane: Recent speed monitoring showed that the 20mph limit was being well exceeded on average, and for the 85th percentile. I will be meeting a representative of the Police next week, and will discuss this amongst a number of other cases.

Scaffolding at 9 Norwich Street: I previously reported that NDC was “hopeful” that their enforcement action might bring some movement in the position of the property owner towards the end of the summer. Clearly, there has been no obvious progress. I had also issued an FOI in regards the cost of the scaffolding, but the responses received have been incomplete. I am continuing my dialogue with the team, as I feel the public deserve transparency as to the cost incurred by the public in regards the scaffolding and hoarding, irrespective of any expectation that said costs will be recovered. I have also written back to NNDC to request an update on their enforcement activities, and to express my disappointment that there seems to have been no obvious progress, despite the earlier assurances.

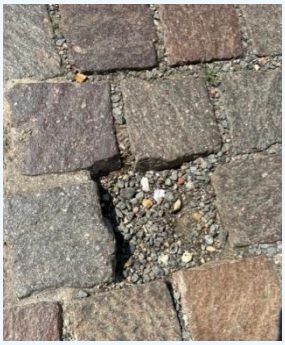
Transport Hub for Fakenham: As stated in the Capital Programme section above, the Millers Walk scheme will be postponed indefinitely. Our deadline of 31 August for a response from Brown & Co has passed, and we did not receive a response to our proposal. The focus will therefore turn to Oak Street and exploring what measures could be delivered there to improve bus infrastructure and passenger facilities. See further details below.

White Horse Street: As the transport hub, in its current vain, will not be taking place then FTC will need to pursue alternate arrangements with the landowner, where the Cllrs feel there is merit in progressing a project to take on this land and to turn it into a seating area. Job closed.

New Venue for the Fakenham Community Shed: I previously advised that I had reached out to NNDC about whether they could accommodate the group in the Fakenham Connect building, but they advised that didn't have any suitable space that could be utilized. I also advised that I would ascertain if the Scouts Hut could be used, as it is my understanding that this building is owned by NCC. I haven't had a chance to progress this. Question: Could FTC make enquiries with the Scouts on my behalf?

Missing coble near Church in Fakenham: You'll recall that I had asked Highways to revisit the temporary repairs and to replace with new cobles. I still await an update from Highways, and will respond back in due course. Question: Have FTC noticed any further progress in this regard?





New Community Space at Railway Sidings in Fakenham: NCC's Arboriculturist met with the Town Clerk and discussed the opportunities for improvement to the existing woodland and confirmed that they aligned very well with the Nature Recovery opportunities. As FTC has responsibility for the health and safety of the trees on the site we recommended that FTC prioritise inspection and appropriate work to the multi-stem ash tree (that has a recent stem failure) at the south western end of the land adjacent to the well used footbridge / road. Further support is outside of NCC's remit and something that Town Council's as landowners need to resource. NCC will advise if we become aware of any project work / funding that could help implement the improvements that FTC would like to achieve for people, habitats and the environment at this location. Job closed.

New Pedestrian Crossing on Greenway Lane: Public consultation expired on the 1st of September. I visited the proposed location and spoke with several residents. All were in support of a scheme. Cllr Punchard expressed concerns about the location, and suggested the crossing should be located closer to the vets. I discussed this with the designer, who confirmed that the position of the crossing was chosen because it is the desire line and the surveys show that this is where most people are crossing. If the crossing is moved further east, then people travelling from Thorpland Road may not use it and NCC would be criticised for not installing it at the most appropriate location. This is supported by some views expressed to me by local residents. The

designer further advised in response to concerns about traffic building up at the crossing, that the crossing could actually make it easier for vehicles to exit Holt Road. If traffic is stationary due to the crossing being used, then it will provide a better opportunity for vehicles to exit the junction when turning right. Irrespective, the detailed design will be reviewed by the Network Safety team and if they have any concerns, they will be highlighted on the safety audit. The project team will now review the consultation feedback, and amend the design as and where appropriate. I had also tasked the project team to consider if there was any scope to incorporate other measures to encourage a reduction in speed on Greenway Lane, but please note comments above.



Proposed TRO at Field Lane and Rudham Stile Lane: See update in the Capital Programme section above. Having requested an extension to the consultation deadline at the end of July, I since submitted my response, which amounted to an objection, and for the following reasons.

1. I feel it has been imposed as a result of a deficiency in parking provision within the original design. The development should have designed in sufficient parking.
2. The residents are predominantly opposed to the TRO, particularly those with limited driveway space for guests. Those who were in favour appear to have more off street parking provision for visitors.
3. I don't see why the residents should have this restriction imposed on them, as a result of design oversight regarding the FLASH.
4. I understand additional parking provision is now being agreed between FTC and NNDC, which should address the parking shortfall.
5. In the short-term, whilst this TRO may reduce occurrences of parking on the Trap Lane end of Rudham Stile Lane, I feel that all this will do is move this limited, and likely short term, problem further up the road.
6. I understand from the residents that the existing TRO (single yellow lines) is not enforced anyway. Without enforcement, the desired effect is not likely to be achieved.

I also stated that I felt that the proposed TRO was not needed, and would impose restrictions unfairly. The Mayor advised me that additional parking provision is being agreed between FTC and NNDC, and so this should address the shortcomings in this regard. I also asked if the implementation of the TRO could be put on hold, and held as a future option, should the additional parking provision not come to fruition, or should other circumstances dictate. I have yet to hear anything in response, but have chased recently.

New Lease at Fakenham Community Centre: As previously stated, a review has been commenced by NCC's Property Services team with a view to agreeing a new lease direct with the Fakenham Community Centre. However, due to NCC's market value policy, and the Best Value obligations under the Local Government Act, and associated regulations, NCC won't be able to offer a lease equivalent to the peppercorn lease that had been in place between NNDC and the Community Centre. It is recognized that it is in everyone's interest to agree a fair and proportionate lease, and I have support from the relevant Cabinet Member to this effect as well. In response to criticism from Cllr Dutton in regard to my approach to the lease negotiation I provided a detailed response by email, and cc'd to all the Town Cllrs, that elaborated the above, whilst also pointing out NCC's debt situation, and the danger of setting precedents.

Parked Cars Impeding Bus Movements on Oak Street: We have been involved in early discussions between the Norfolk Parking Partnership and BCKLWN about implementing some softer measures to address the indiscriminate parking. A meeting is to be held shortly, after which I will feed back to FTC. Holidays have delayed this this meeting, but the relevant staff are back off leave now.

Temporary Measures at Rugby Club: It is my understanding the illegally installed speed humps have now been removed by NNDC, and the lighting now has an electrical certificate and is also protected by Heras fencing. Therefore, NCC Highways is happy that their requests have been complied with in order to keep the public safe whilst travelling on the public highway. Job closed.

Mobile Reception in Fakenham: NCC's Director of Digital & Transformation is taking a paper to Cabinet to lobby the mobile services providers to improve coverage. I have asked him to incorporate Fakenham in the paper, ref. poor connectivity experienced by some of the market traders who trade in town.

Parking Concerns at Nelson Rd: Cars being parked in from of resident's property, inhibiting access to front door, and to egress from driveway. I am working with Cllr Vickers on this job). H bar to be installed when other works are taking place in the area, within next few months. Also, Cllrs Vickers is going to write to the Masons about this issue too.

Alleged Underage Selling of Vapes to Children: Intelligence received via Cllr Vickers of alleged selling of vapes to children and underage young people. I reported this to Trading Standards. Further details will not be shared here, due to enforcement reasons.

A-boards on Footpaths: Complaint relayed to FTC about shops putting A-boards out on footpaths, making it difficult for users of scooters to get past. FTC is going to take some photos and come back to me. I believe Cllr Girton has taken some action in relation to this situation as well.

Faded Road Markings on Norwich Road: The road markings at the Conservative Club end of Norwich Road and outside Fakenham Junior School on Queens Road have become faded and need

to be freshened. Highways report that works are to be completed W/C 14th of Sept, weather permitting.

Banking Hub: I sent a letter to LINK in support of a banking hub for Fakenham. However, LINK maintained their position, that there was not sufficient justification. I have since offered to support other efforts to try to secure this necessary service for the town, and I await a response from NNDC.

Wall and Fence Removal on Norwich Road / Barons Hall Lane: Highways have written to a resident to require removal of a retaining wall, a fence, and shingle on a plot of land owned by the resident which is at the front and side of the property. This is because Highways believe there are highways rights over the sections of land in question. One month has been allowed for the works to be undertaken. I have visited the resident at her property and can't see any visibility / obstructions. I am now liaising with senior management at Highways to find a pragmatic way forward, and have agreed that Highways will pause their action until further notice.

HEMPTON WITH PUDDING NORTON AND TESTERTON PC

Hempton Roundabout Project: As detailed in the capital projects section above, I have paused the project and instructed a detailed review. This is primarily due to cost escalation (£1.3million to £4million), but also due to concerns raised by Parish Councillors, and several residents. The scope of the review is being developed. I await an update from the Project Team, but key members are currently on annual leave.

Perceived Speeding in Pudding Norton: Concerns have been raised by a resident around lorries potentially speeding along the A1065. I have discussed this with the Police Community Speedwatch Officer who agreed to conduct some speed monitoring. Furthermore, Highways will liaise with the Network Safety Team for any recent accident data.

DUNTON WITH SHEREFORD PARISH

Nothing to report. I hope to attend the next PC meeting.

TATTERSETT PARISH

Perceived Speeding (Village and The Street): The Highways Network Safety Team confirmed that there is inadequate justification for a speed monitoring survey or feasibility study at this time. Also, since the Local Member's fund has been redirected, I am not able to instruct a speed monitoring survey either. However, the PC could also elect to instruct speed monitoring itself, which NCC would be happy to conduct. The cost would need to be met from the PC's budget. I had also

suggested that the PC consider Community Speedwatch (CSW). I will also be meeting with the Police Community Speedwatch Officer next week and will discuss this location.

Tattersett Business Park (Tyre Mountain): As reported last month, NNDC had written to the landowner on 1st May of this year advising him of NNDC's intention to re-start enforcement action. Since there had been no progress positive progress by early August, I expect NNDC to take formal legal action to achieve removal of the tyres. I have written to NNDC and the Environment Agency to express my dissatisfaction and to urge both to answer a number of questions about their enforcement intentions going forwards. I have since received a response from both agreeing to a multi-agency meeting with the PC, to be arranged in due course. The Fire and Rescue Service have agreed to attend the PC meeting in January to present their contingency plans for dealing with a fire at the business park, were the tyres to catch fire.

Tattersett Business Park site (Waste Timber Pile): I previously advised that NCC's waste enforcement team had overseen the removal of 88tonees of the waste wood, and that they are undertaking monthly site inspections to ensure that the clearance works continued appropriately. However, the processing taking place to remove the woodpile led to the site exemption being de-registered by the Environment Agency, due to dust being generated. Furthermore, the Environment Agency have this week served a Section 59 Notice requiring the unprocessed waste to be removed. The Notice is required to be complied with by 7th December although there is a right of appeal, which may delay the compliance date.

Safety Concerns about Fourwinds Crossroads: I previously advised that post installation of the 'Turning traffic X roads' sign on the junction approaches the accident frequency had dropped significantly and that of the 3 most recent recorded collisions, it appears the only collision which occurred at the junction itself was a rear end collision hit and run, which did not involve a vehicle pulling out at the junction. The Network Safety Team stated that the long-term record suggested that the provision of the signs were working well and so they would not consider the site to meet the intervention level. However, the team's database didn't show the 3 collisions in June 2026. As such, I asked the team to check and assess these new records in August, but I did not hear back. I since followed up with my Highways Engineer who agreed to chase the Network Safety Team for a follow up response. Nothing received at the time of writing.

Road Markings on Tattersett Road and the B1454: Road markings are practically nonexistent at the junction of the Tattersett Road and the B1454 on the main road leading up to Wicken Green village. Highways confirmed that the target date is 10/09/26, but my Highways Engineer will monitor and will chase for a response from the contractor, where there is a delay. The holes at the junction are going to be filled as well.

HELHOUGHTON PARISH

Digital Connectivity at Village Hall: You'll be aware that the work is more complex than initially thought, and that there is a need to install 26 meters of ducting in the pavement. This had been scheduled for early September, but it did not go ahead. NCC escalated the issue and were advised that out network services provider will be meeting with the Vodafone service manager to discuss

this case specifically, so they can understand why we are having problems, and to make sure the correct Openreach engineers are appointed for the next installation appointment. They will also be escalating it directly with Openreach, and I have done the same via our own Openreach contacts. Let's hope the results are worth the wait!

Flooding in Buck Yard: Resident contacted me about both recent and historical surface water flooding in Buck Yard. I have been in touch with the Flood Management Team at NCC and who have now visited the location. We now await a report from the Officer as to next steps. I have also discussed this with Highways ref. possible mitigation steps that might be taken where justified / feasible. We need to wait for the report before taking this further.

Flooding on underneath rail bridge on Broomsthorpe Road: It appears that silt removed from an earlier construction activities has been piled up on the adjacent embankment, and with the heavy rain this has been partially washed back down and over the gulley. Highways raise a job to remove the silt / soil from the bank, and reclean the gulley. Also, I asked Highways to check the maintenance schedule for the gulley as it needs regular maintenance, and to report back.

RAYNHAM PARISH

Village Gateway Impact Damage A1065 East Raynham: See comments and update in the Capital Programme section above. We are currently awaiting the delivery of the gateway from Glasdon. We have escalated the delay with them, and await a follow up response. I chased Highways again this week for an update. Nothing further received at the time of writing.

Clearance of the footpath in East Raynham alongside the A1065: This footpath is obstructed by overgrown foliage. Works have been started further up the road. The section in question is part of a work packet that will be issued to the Contractor shortly. I asked my Highways Engineer to provide a date, during our meeting this week, but have yet to hear back.

OTHER CASEWORK

I am continuing to manage a complaint about SEND support to a local constituent. Complaint partially upheld. Awaiting response from the complainant. No further details can be shared due to confidentiality.

I am also dealing with some neighbour related complaints work. No further details can be shared.

PLANNING DECISIONS

NCC Planning Services: Minerals and Waste and County Council's own applications consulted, during July 2026:

None in the division this month.

NCC Planning Services: Applications consulted on during July 2026:

Sculthorpe: Display of 1no. freestanding non-illuminated advertisement for brewery and taproom at site entrance (retrospective): Along The Side Of The A148 At Co Ordinates 591343, 330924, Adjacent To The Gateway To The Field Known As The Fakenham Breck:

Norfolk County Council objected to the retrospective application for a brewery and taproom advertisement sign because it is located on the adopted highway verge adjacent to the A148 Fakenham Bypass. The Authority considers that the sign does not comply with its *Safe, Sustainable Development* guidance for structures within the highway, is likely to be contrary to Section 152 of the Highways Act 1980, and constitutes an obstruction and potential visual distraction to highway users. Consequently, it recommends refusal under reason SHCR 34. However, the objection relates solely to the sign's location within the public highway, and the Authority advises that it would be unlikely to object if the sign were relocated onto private land.

Fakenham: Demolition of all existing buildings and the erection of a 66-bed care home with external amenities and associated parking at Ceramic Tile Distributors, 74 Holt Road, Fakenham, Norfolk, NR21 8DY:

Norfolk County Council has maintained its objection to planning application PF/26/0841 for the proposed 66-bed care home at the former Ceramic Tile Distributors site on Holt Road, Fakenham, despite revised drainage information being submitted. While some issues have been addressed in principle, significant concerns remain regarding infiltration testing, groundwater monitoring, contamination risks, surface water drainage design, runoff calculations, SuDS biodiversity and amenity benefits, maintenance arrangements, and the lack of evidence that the proposed drainage strategy will effectively manage flood risk without impacting surrounding areas. The council has requested further information before it can reconsider its objection.

Planning application PF/25/2321 for the redevelopment of the former Fakenham College site, including the restoration and conversion of Highfield House, conversion of two classroom blocks into six residential units, and construction of 20 new homes.

Following its fifth consultation on the proposal, the Norfolk County Council reviewed additional information submitted by the applicant addressing previous concerns about finished floor levels and flood protection measures. The authority is now satisfied that the proposed dwellings will achieve the required freeboard above maximum design water levels and therefore raises no objection to the application, subject to conditions requiring a detailed Construction Management Plan for surface water before development begins and implementation of the approved Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy throughout the development.

Note: Details of applications can be found on the website Online Planning Services - Seach and comment on planning applications.

NCC GENERAL UPDATES / NEWS

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Fire & Rescue Service continuing to respond to high summer demand

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service is continuing to raise awareness to the public around the threat of wildfires this summer, with more hot and dry weather in Norfolk. Demand has been especially high on Norfolk's firefighters this summer, with 1,270 emergencies attended in July. Resources continue

to be stretched, and activity levels are commensurate with 2022. The Service has shared posters with parish councils across the county with advice on how to prevent outdoor fires, and worked with Norfolk Trails and the Norfolk Resilience Forum to produce signage on the county's trail posts on what to do in the event of fire. You can request these via norfolkresilienceforum@norfolk.gov.uk. They are continuing to work with other groups including local wildlife trusts, Forestry England, and Heritage Railways to discuss the increased risks of the hot and dry weather. Senior fire officers have been regular guests on Radio Norfolk, issuing public guidance on how the public can help prevent incidents, and the Service has also been featured in articles on BBC Look East and ITV Anglia.

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government urged to halt local government reorganisation in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council's deputy leader Councillor Robin Hunter-Clarke has written to newly appointed Secretary of State for local government, Angela Rayner, to ask for a halt to local government reorganisation. Further details and a copy of the letter are available in the county council news release here.

The Big Conversation on Adult Social Care

Baroness Casey of Blackstock has launched The Big Conversation on Care, offering the public a direct role in shaping the future of adult social care in England. Between now and April 2027, The Big Conversation will give people across England the opportunity to say what they want and expect from a future National Care Service, including on the tough questions on who it should support, what families should reasonably be expected to do, and how the country should pay for care in a fair and sustainable way. The Big Conversation will run in two phases. The first phase from July to November, will ask people about the values and principles we should all expect from a care system and who should be eligible for support. The second phase will focus on how care should be funded and how reform should be delivered. Everyone is encouraged to participate and have their say. Further details and a link to take part are available at The Big Conversation on Care | The Casey Commission.

Dennis Bacon announced as preferred appointment for NCC chief executive

Following a recruitment process Norfolk County Council announced today that Dennis Bacon was its preferred appointment for chief executive. This is has since been approved by Full Council on the 14th of August. Dennis has wide ranging senior executive level experience of leading and delivering transformation in the health and care sector and across a series of commercial ventures. His previous roles have included Chairman of the Norfolk Independent Care Association for 19 years supporting over 600 organisations with 11,000 staff, and he was an executive member of the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. He was also the first independent sector representative appointed to an NHS System Leadership Board. He has also been a past recipient of Outstanding Leadership in Public Services Award from Norfolk County Council. Dennis and his family live in Norfolk. County council leader, Cllr David Bick, said: "We were impressed with Dennis's commercial and public sector experience, and his determination to

lead the changes required at Norfolk County Council to ensure value for money and quality services for the residents of Norfolk."



Temporary changes to fridge, freezer and other cooling appliance disposal services

Norfolk County Council has announced temporary changes to fridge, freezer and other cooling appliance disposal services due to a nationwide shortage of specialist recycling and processing capacity. From 6 August 2026, these items will only be accepted at seven larger recycling centres across Norfolk, including Dereham, King's Lynn, Thetford and Norwich's north and south sites. The council says the issue is beyond its control and has been worsened by disruptions at specialist treatment facilities, including a recent fire at a processing plant in Thetford. Residents are being encouraged to delay disposal where possible, reuse, repair or donate working appliances, and take advantage of retailer take-back schemes when purchasing replacements. The council has secured temporary storage arrangements and is working with the Government and Environment Agency to find a longer-term solution while maintaining a disposal service for essential cases.

Mental health hubs to expand across England

The Government has announced plans to create nearly 200 community mental health centres and specialist mental health A&Es across England by 2029, aiming to improve access to urgent support closer to home. The first new sites are due to open this autumn, with the programme backed by £343 million. The rollout includes 100 new community mental health centres, offering walk-in support without a referral and without a months-long wait, and 59 dedicated mental health emergency departments giving people in crisis specialist care in a place designed for them. They will bring together existing teams of nurses, therapists and support workers. Some of the community hubs will be newly built facilities, while others will be in community or high street locations to move care closer to where people live, improving access. They will all be in the heart of the neighbourhoods they serve and designed as welcoming settings with a non-clinical appearance. The initiative forms part of the forthcoming Mental Health Strategy, which will look beyond the NHS to the role of schools, employers, local government and the voluntary sector in supporting good mental health.

Rewiring the state – Cabinet Office statement

The Cabinet Office has published a statement setting out the Government's intention to shift more power, funding and accountability from Whitehall to local leaders. This will mean giving elected mayors, strategic authorities and local authorities more influence over decisions affecting their areas, with the stated aim of supporting economic growth, improving public services and giving communities more say over local priorities. The statement refers to further devolution of powers, fiscal devolution and closer alignment of public services within strategic authority areas. It also restates the Government's expectation that all areas should move towards a strategic authority model by 2028. Future devolution arrangements may include greater local control over areas such as funding, transport, skills, housing and economic development. The Government says that this autumn, alongside the Budget and a fiscal devolution roadmap that will set out their approach to revenue assignment and rates retention, they will publish a White Paper detailing plans for the full set of reforms and a clear timetable for their implementation. This is expected to include plans for legislation, the alignment of public service geographies, and the devolution of new powers and functions.

Changes to central government's public procurement spending rules

The Government has announced changes to public procurement rules so that businesses bidding for central government contracts are assessed more strongly on how they support jobs and skills, and more weighting will be given to benefits for local communities. Suppliers will be expected to show how they will support British jobs, skills and opportunities, including for young people not in education, employment or training, care leavers and people with long-term health conditions. For central government contracts worth £5 million or more, the weighting given to benefits for the local community will increase from 10% to 20%. The new approach will replace the current model, which considers wider economic, social and environmental value, such as innovation, fair working conditions, workforce wellbeing, environmental protection, habitat creation, energy efficiency and action on climate change. The changes will apply to central government procurement from 1 January 2027, with detailed technical guidance expected this autumn. The threshold for applying the rules will rise to contracts above £1 million, so they are less likely to apply to smaller contracts typically sought by smaller firms and local social enterprises. The announcement forms part of the Government's wider aim to use public spending to support economic growth.

Norfolk County Council is set to trial an innovative new pothole repair machine

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve road maintenance and keep the county's highways in the best possible condition. The trial will take place during the first week of September and will be used on a number of planned repairs in South Norfolk. The JCB Pothole Pro is a specialist machine designed to repair potholes and carriageway defects more quickly and efficiently than traditional methods, and the trial will help assess whether the technology can deliver longer-lasting repairs while reducing the time needed on site. Councillor Tom Dickerson, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, said: "The condition of Norfolk's roads is a top priority for us, and we're always looking for innovative ways to maintain them while making the best use of taxpayers' money. The JCB Pothole Pro has been praised elsewhere for its ability to carry out repairs quickly and efficiently, and this trial will help us understand how it performs on Norfolk's roads. If successful, it could become a valuable tool in our ongoing work to improve the condition of the county's highway network." The machine and operator are being provided at no cost to the council for this short trial, and if the trial proves successful, a longer-term trial will be considered. The trial

forms part of the council's continued commitment to maintaining and improving Norfolk's highway network while exploring new techniques and technologies that can provide more durable repairs and minimise disruption for road users.



Tackling the trade of illicit tobacco and cigarettes on high streets throughout the county

There are three ways 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

Crackdown on vaping and betting shops to revitalise high streets

The Government has announced plans to require new vape shops and adult gaming centres to obtain planning permission. It also intends to give councils greater powers to block betting shops and close businesses selling illegal tobacco. The changes are intended to give local councils and communities a stronger say over whether new betting shops, vape shops and adult gaming centres are appropriate for their area, particularly on high streets. The Government has also said it will set clearer expectations for the design and appearance of high street shopfronts, supported by practical guidance for councils. As a point of clarification, licensed betting shops and adult gaming

centres are not the same type of business, nor are they being treated identically under these proposals. Licensed betting shops operate under a distinct regulatory framework and are separate from adult gaming centres in both their operation and their relationship with sectors such as British horseracing.

Heritage Open Days in Norfolk, 11–20 September

Norfolk Heritage Open Days - 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.

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 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.

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

Parish Partnership

The Councillor Robin Hunter-Clarke, newly appointed Deputy Leader of Norfolk County Council, writes to town and parish councils to recognise the important role they play as the level of government closest to local residents and to reaffirm the County Council's commitment to working closely with them. Drawing on his own experience in local government, he highlights the valuable contributions councils make to their communities and emphasises the importance of collaboration, particularly through initiatives such as the Parish Partnership Scheme, which supported 99 highway improvement projects across 91 parishes in 2026/27 with a combined value of over £769,000. He stresses the need for parish and town councils' voices to be heard as local government undergoes significant change and expresses his intention to engage directly with councils, strengthen partnerships, and explore further opportunities to improve outcomes for Norfolk residents.

£6.3 million contract with Inner Circle

Robin Hunter-Clarke, Deputy Leader of Norfolk County Council, has announced the termination of the council's £6.3 million contract with Inner Circle, arguing that it represented poor value for money, lacked proper scrutiny when approved, and failed to deliver sufficient progress. He stated that Local Government Reorganisation should be led by the council's own officers rather than costly external consultants, and said the decision is intended to restore accountability, protect taxpayers' money, improve financial management and ensure resources are focused on delivering tangible results for Norfolk residents.

First report from Norfolk County Council's Cabinet

Norfolk County Council's Cabinet has published its first major report since taking office, outlining achievements from its first 100 days and setting out five new priorities under the banner *Standing Up for Norfolk*. The report highlights measures including £1.2m investment in Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, £924,000 for roads and highways, savings achieved through contract renegotiations and service changes, tougher spending controls, a review of net zero activity, and action against illegal tobacco shops. Looking ahead, the administration's priorities focus on putting residents first, growing the economy, keeping Norfolk moving, building strong communities, and running an efficient and effective council. Cabinet will consider the report at its meeting on 11 September, with a detailed delivery plan due in November. Read the full report here: View the Cabinet report.

Recruiting more foster carers

Norfolk County Council is continuing its drive to recruit more foster carers, recognising the vital role they play in providing safe, stable and supportive homes for children and young people. While eight new carers have been approved since the campaign began last September, including some through employee referrals, the council is still working towards its target of 50 new carers and is particularly seeking people who can offer overnight, weekend and short-break care. Cllrs who may be interested in fostering themselves, or who know someone who would be suitable, are invited to attend a series of informal face-to-face or online information sessions during September to learn more about the different fostering opportunities and ask questions; **visit our website for the list of September dates**.