

County Councillor Report for September 2026

Local Government Reorganisation paused

The Government has announced that it is halting plans for a major reorganisation of local councils in Norfolk. The announcement means the proposal that would have replaced Norfolk's existing councils with three new authorities will not, for the time being, go ahead. The government is reviewing their proposals following new legal advice.

For residents, this means the future shape of local government in Norfolk remains under review while the Government considers its next steps. Services will continue to be delivered as normal.

Norfolk County Council Chief Executive

Norfolk County Council voted on the appointment of Dennis Bacon as its chief executive at a full council meeting on Friday 14 August. Dennis Bacon started in his post last week.

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.

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.

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.

The report is 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.

National Planning Policy Framework update

The Government has published a revised [National Planning Policy Framework](#), alongside wider reforms intended to create a clearer, more rules-based planning system, increase housing delivery and support economic growth. The National Scheme of Delegation introduces a new statutory framework for planning decision-making which comes into force on 31 October.

The revised framework introduces a stronger presumption in favour of sustainable development, places greater emphasis on housing growth and development around well-connected railway stations, increases the weight of national policy in planning decisions, and is intended to speed up delivery of homes, infrastructure and economic growth across England.

The Regulations introduce two categories of planning application:

Schedule 1 applications must be determined by planning officers and cannot be referred to Planning Committee.

Schedule 2 applications are presumed to be delegated to planning officers but may be referred to planning committee where the statutory "Gateway Test" criteria is met.

For Norfolk, a key issue is to clearly ensure that increases in housing delivery are matched by timely investment in infrastructure and local services.

Environment Agency consultation responses to water management issues

The Environment Agency's Significant Water Management Issues consultation ran from November 2025 to May 2026, with responses from environmental groups, water companies, farmers, businesses, councils, partnerships, community groups and residents.

The [responses](#) will inform the next river basin management plans, with draft plans due for consultation from December 2026.

The main message was the need for faster progress, stronger collaboration, better evidence, clearer funding and action that tackles the causes of environmental decline, linking water, nature, climate, communities and growth.

Key concerns included wastewater pollution, agricultural and urban runoff, chemicals, plastics, PFAS, road pollution and other emerging contaminants.

Respondents also supported nature-based solutions, including wetlands, river restoration, sustainable drainage, peatland recovery, floodplain reconnection and coastal habitat restoration.

Reporting shops suspected to be selling illicit tobacco and vapes

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

A note on sharing: if posting on social media, please do not name specific premises or businesses, as operations are intelligence-led and live.

August was a 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.

Cabinet sets out new priorities for the County Council

The Stand up for Norfolk report outlines five new priorities for the council:

- Putting Norfolk's residents first - Supporting families, protecting vulnerable people and making sure residents are heard.
- Growing Norfolk's economy - Backing business, supporting jobs and investment and helping high streets and market towns thrive.
- Keeping Norfolk moving - Fixing roads, improving transport and creating better connected communities.
- Building strong communities and places - Building safe, resilient and inclusive communities where people are proud of where they live.
- Running an efficient and effective council - Spending wisely, challenging waste and focusing on what matters most.

A detailed delivery plan will be developed for November's cabinet meeting.

Flu Vaccinations - NHS Norfolk & Suffolk Integrated Care Board

The NHS is preparing for winter earlier than usual. Early booking is intended to help protect vulnerable residents and reduce pressure on local NHS services during the winter period.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Heritage Open Days in Norfolk, 11–20 September

A printed Norfolk listings brochure for Heritage Open Days (HODs) in Norfolk 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. Further information, brochures and online booking are available on the HOD pages link [Everything you need to know](#).

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Norfolk County Council
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