



Norfolk County Council

County Councillor Report July & August 2026

Cllr Kabeer Kher, Yare & Necton

Cabinet Member for Business, Skills & Agriculture

John Innes Centre

On July 2nd I attended an event at the John Innes Centre, part of Norwich Research Park. I heard from several companies who have been spun out of the park and are now growing businesses, creating jobs here in Norfolk. The overriding theme of the day was that we have so much innovative research happening here in Norfolk we just need to get better at transforming that potential into larger companies that base themselves here.

Hethel Innovation

One of the key challenges we have in this region is the scale-up funding gap which takes small start-up companies on towards being large well-established employers. That's one of the reasons I am now meeting with Hethel Innovation every month, to look for these growth opportunities and help these small businesses find the investment they need to create jobs here in Norfolk.



Later that evening I also met with the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of East Anglia Julian Blow and we had a robust discussion about the need for our local students to get better value for their tuition fees. We also talked in depth about the need for the University to be more commercial, creating spin-off businesses using the research they do, to reduce the financial burden on students.

Norwich University of Arts

On July 8th I visited the Norwich University of Arts Immersive Studio in Mile Cross. This is a fantastic film studio and games design centre which is breathing new life into the creative industries in Norfolk. The facilities there are unique in the UK and will enable students of game design, film and television to train using cutting edge technology. The facility is also available to any company wishing to make use of the technology. I will be looking to involve the University in our upcoming Innovation Conference to showcase their facilities to the great Norfolk area.



Wayland Digital and Creative Media Centre

On July 9th I met with Dr David Dent who is working on the **Wayland Digital and Creative Media Centre (DCMC)** planned for Watton High Street. The aim of this scheme is to breathe new life into the town centre by regenerating the old police station and converting Wayland House into a modern tech hub. The facilities will offer virtual reality (**VR**) tech labs, dedicated podcast studios, and modern co-working spaces for start-ups.



The project is spearheaded by the Wayland Partnership Development Trust and the Wayland Chamber of Commerce, with strategic funding and planning support from Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council, and Hethel Innovation. I will be looking to support the planning application with funding from Norfolk County Council to help make this project a reality.

University of East Anglia Dentist School

On July 22nd I visited the construction site of the new dental school for the University of East Anglia which will train 25 students per year. I discussed with the University the option of opening a dental school which can serve members of the public on the NHS. That is something we in NCC are looking to support and I will be helping the UEA to seek funding from the Greater Norwich Growth Board to make it happen.



Brackenwoods Action Group, Necton

Later that evening I attended the Brackenwoods Action Group meeting in Necton to voice my opposition to the proposed development of 25 dwellings to the east of Brackenwoods. Planning was previously rejected on this land in 2018 due to surface water flooding risk to the low-lying neighbouring properties, a lack of sufficient highways infrastructure and a high number of local TPOs. I can see no evidence that any of these conditions have changed and on that basis I oppose the development. I have provided the action group with some of the historic objections so they have head start in building their case.

Agri-Food Programme

On July 29th I met with County Council officers to discuss an outline plan for an Agri-Food Programme. This will be a bespoke business support programme to help struggling farmers modernise their practises and take advantage of the research happening locally to make agriculture more profitable for farmers as well as more nutritious for consumers.

I am pleased to see the DEFRA white paper on permitted development rights for water management. Our farmers urgently need the freedom to collaborate and manage the land in a way that reduces water waste and this is a key step along that journey. This is exactly the kind of legislative change that the Agri-Food Programme will promote amongst participants so they're fully up to date on the opportunities available to them.

Joint Business Board

On July 30th I attended a meeting of the Joint Business Board for Norfolk and Suffolk. This is a forum of business leaders throughout the region who come together to influence government and utility companies like UK Power Networks to invest in the region and drive business growth. During the meeting our workshop established some of the top priorities for the board which we will be refining over the coming months into a more focused plan of action.

New CEO

On August 14th we held an Extraordinary Full Council meeting in order to confirm Mr Dennis Bacon as our new Chief Executive of the Council. Mr Bacon's appointment was passed by a large majority of the council. We wish outgoing CEO Tom McCabe all the best with his future endeavours.



Apex Data Centre

On August 17th I met with concerned local residents in Keswick, site of the proposed data centre, who voiced their concerns about the size and scale of the proposal. I have fed back my findings into council who will submit feedback to South Norfolk Council who have the ultimate decision over any planning application.

Chambers of Commerce

On August 18th I met with the Norfolk Chambers of Commerce who showed me their newly renovated facility. We also spent some time discussing ways to help small businesses. Off the back of this meeting I have asked my department to explore ways that we, along with the Chambers of Commerce, can help small businesses tender for government projects, by supporting them with admin and regulatory compliance.



Banham Zoo Commercial Zone

On August 19th I met with Adam Goymour of Banham Zoo to discuss how the zoo can help to develop the village's commercial offering and attract more visitors to the area. We discussed the challenges the Norfolk visitor economy is facing and explored ideas for improving the attractiveness of Norfolk as a tourist destination.

