Norfolk County Council

Our First 100 Days

Tough Questions
Decisive Action

Better Services • Better Value • A Stronger Future

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Adult Social Care
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Foreword

When we took office, we promised to ask tough questions, challenge waste and put **Norfolk first**.

Our First 100 Days: Tough Questions. Decisive Action.

In our first 100 days, that is exactly what we have done. We have tightened spending controls, saved money, backed frontline services and started tackling long-standing problems.

There is much more to do. Demand is rising, budgets are tight and too many systems do not deliver the value residents should expect. We will keep testing every pound, fixing the basics and acting where change is needed.

Our direction is clear: protect essential services, support growth, improve roads, strengthen communities and run a council that works harder for Norfolk.

This report sets out what we have found after taking office and the changes now required. We will keep challenging activity so public money supports the services and outcomes that matter most to residents.

R. Hunter-Clarke

Councillor David Bick
Leader of Norfolk County Council

Councillor Robin Hunter-Clarke
Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Strategy, Devolution and LGR

Delivering for Norfolk

What We've Achieved So Far

£6.3m	**£163.8k**	**£1.2m**	**£924k**	**5**
contract stopped	**Saved by** removing political assistants	**Invested in** Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service	**Invested in** roads and highways	**Illegal tobacco** shops closed in Great Yarmouth

Protecting Taxpayers’ Money

- Stopped a **£6.3m** consultancy contract
- **£170k** saved by stopping non-essential marketing spending.
- Over **£300k** saved through service changes.
- Strengthened procurement to get better value for taxpayers.
- Put tougher checks in place on spending and major projects.

Investing in Frontline Services

This Administration is About Action not Words.

- **£1.2m** invested in Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service.
- **£924k** invested in better roads and highways.
- New pothole repair technology trialled to speed up road repairs.
- Maker’s Close opened to help older people live independently.
- Submitted SEND plan to government.

Protecting Communities

- Five illegal tobacco shops shut down in Great Yarmouth.
- Action being taken with residents to tackle anti-social behaviour on Britannia Road.

Standing up for Norfolk

It’s Time to Stop this Waste

- Challenged government’s plans for local government reorganisation.
- Opted out of voluntary joint committees that cost money but make no decisions.
- Put government ministers on notice over unwanted solar farm decisions.

Introduction

Norfolk County Council delivers vital services across a large rural and coastal county.

We have found committed staff, valued services, strong communities and major economic assets, but also stretched systems, long-standing funding pressures and uncertainty caused by national reform.

The 2026-27 budget shows that the Council must absorb high demand and inflationary growth while delivering £42.334m of savings, and the MTFS contains a £105.577m gap over the period 2027-28 to 2029-30.

Adult social care, children's services and other statutory demands continue to outpace funding, while the Council carries £964.2 million of external borrowing. Residents expect visible improvements, quicker decisions, clear accountability and careful use of public money.

Source: Norfolk County Council Revenue and Capital Budget 2026-27 to 2029-30

Grip, Governance and Value for Money

We have found weak links between spending, delivery and accountability. Controls over contracts and projects varied, and some overspends and investment decisions lacked clear approval trails, robust business cases, affordability tests and evidence of value for money. Decision thresholds, public performance reporting and scrutiny also need tightening.

We also identified activity requiring a clearer test of cost, outcomes and continued purpose, including major programmes, capital schemes, communications, service arrangements, small funding pots and council-owned companies.

What We Have Done:

- Lowered decision thresholds from **£1.25 million** to **£500,000** to strengthen transparency and councillor oversight.
- Saved **£170,000** by stopping non-essential marketing spending.
- Introduced mandatory gateway checks for larger contracts and projects.
- Reviewed major project spending and established oversight groups to reduce risk.
- Initiated a review of the Council's constitution to speed up decisions and improve transparency.
- Launched a review of net zero activity.

Workforce, Finances and Ways of Working

Benchmarking shows that Norfolk employs more people, compared with a nearest-neighbour average and relies far less on agency and temporary staff. The core issue is whether people, budgets, skills and activity align with priorities and resident outcomes.

Workforce and finance data doesn't always align and we have found gaps in control of working arrangements, office use and staff deployment. Technology, automation and artificial intelligence are not yet fully deployed to the frontline.

Norfolk has balanced its 2026/27 budget, but only through substantial savings and active management of serious demand and inflation pressures. Adult social care costs are slightly higher than England's although the council spends a lower amount on adult social care than the Relative Needs Formula suggests is needed for its population. Unallocated general fund balances are lower. We therefore need tighter spending discipline, stronger productivity and prevention, and sharper focus on the largest cost pressures.

Through the budget process, we are testing the purpose and value of discretionary services and driving savings across corporate activity.

What We Have Done:

- Saved **£163.8k** by removing political assistants.
- Launched a wider productivity review and are strengthening workforce oversight.
- Reviewed workforce benchmarking, vacancies, office use, staff deployment and productivity.
- Started expanding technology, automation and artificial intelligence to cut manual work and improve services.
- Increased focus on office utilisation, partner use of space and disposal of surplus property.
- Put interim workforce data improvements in place ahead of a new case management system later this year.

Areas of High Cost

We have found high or rising costs in specialist and residential placements, Home to School Transport, local government reorganisation and highways contracts.

Many reflect statutory duties or essential infrastructure, but every area must show a clear link between cost, demand, decisions, outcomes and value for money.

What We Have Done:

- Stopped a **£6.3 million** consultancy contract, protecting taxpayers' money and restoring accountability by bringing local government reorganisation work under direct council leadership.
- Targeted high-cost activity through the budget process, where spending, outcomes or purpose need stronger challenge.
- Launched reviews of transformation programmes, council-owned companies and other major spending areas.
- Required clearer evidence before further spending is committed.
- Tested impact, savings opportunities, contract control and value for money.

4

Roads and Transport

We maintain more than 6,000 miles of local roads and over 3,500 structural assets, with an estimated repairs backlog of £70 million to £80 million. We have found limited investment in modern repair methods, recurring safety concerns around schools and a need for stronger control of major highways contracts and capital schemes.

What We Have Done:

- Redirected **£924,000** from separate councillor spending pots into highway improvements to target priority road improvements.
- Started reviewing highways contracting to secure better value for money.
- Began trialling a dedicated pothole machine to repair defects faster and more efficiently.

Children and Adult Services

We have found rising demand, greater complexity and funding that has not kept pace across children's and adult services. Key pressures include special educational needs and disabilities, Home to School Transport, residential placements, foster care and high-cost care. We need stronger prevention, more local provision and support that helps people remain independent and close to home.

What We Have Done:

- Submitted Norfolk's special educational needs and disabilities funding plan to government.
- Continue to press government to provide Norfolk with fair and sustainable funding.
- Opened the Maker's Close supported living site to help older people live independently and reduce long-term care costs.
- Reviewed demand drivers and opportunities to strengthen prevention, independence and local provision.
- Made Home to School Transport a priority for use of technology to manage efficient route planning as well as reviewing our policy approach.

Communities and Frontline Services

We have found growing pressure across fire and rescue, waste, libraries, museums and countryside services. Risks include extreme weather, battery fires, unsafe disposal, fly-tipping and ageing buildings. We need to test current service arrangements, strengthen resilience, improve access and generate more income from successful cultural assets like the Norwich Castle Museum.

©Norwich Castle Museum Beth Moseley Photography

What We Have Done:

- Redirected nearly **£1.2 million** into Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to strengthen frontline capacity and resilience.
- Shut down five illegal tobacco shops in Great Yarmouth.
- Formally opposed large-scale solar proposals where they conflict with the expressed views of local communities.
- Took decisive action to tackle the 14 illegal encampments we found on Council land, successfully closing 11 sites and making rapid progress towards closing the remaining 3 in the coming days.
- Reviewed resilience and funding needs across frontline community services.
- Adopted a consistent approach to flags on Council buildings, with the Norfolk and United Kingdom flags representing our shared local and national civic identity.

Economic Growth

Norfolk has major strengths in food and farming, energy, manufacturing, tourism, digital industries and rural enterprise. These strengths and much of the county's innovation lack national recognition, while businesses face rising costs, skills shortages and infrastructure constraints, like water or energy. We need to help firms scale, expand apprenticeships and make a stronger case for investment.

What We Have Done:

- We renewed the commitment to Norfolk's high streets, expanding the High Streets Matter programme to additional Norfolk towns.
- We expanded the Norfolk Ambassadors programme, creating a stronger network of advocates to promote Norfolk, attract investment.
- We mobilised rapid support for workers affected by announced business closures.
- We delivered Norfolk's largest apprenticeship event to date, and took employment and training support directly into communities.
- We delivered our best attended apprenticeship event to date.

National Change

Local government reorganisation is creating uncertainty, cost and lost productivity. Government plans would replace eight councils with three unitary councils, with shadow authorities expected in 2027 and new councils due to start in April 2028. We must prepare responsibly, protect services and challenge proposals that do not improve value, outcomes or local accountability.

What We Have Done:

- Challenged the government's proposals through legal action and direct ministerial representations.
- Refused to join voluntary joint committees linked to the reorganisation.
- Assessed the impact of reorganisation on services, cost and democratic accountability.

Strategic Implications

We will fix the basics, challenge waste, raise productivity, strengthen accountability and improve services and value through five priorities:

1

Residents First

Respond to rising demand, improve support for children, families and vulnerable adults, listen to residents and make the case for fair funding.

2

Growing Norfolk's Economy

Back businesses, support skills and apprenticeships, promote Norfolk's business sectors and help attract investment.

3

Keeping Norfolk Moving

focus on potholes, preventative maintenance, safer journeys, better transport connections and key infrastructure.

4

Building Stronger Norfolk Communities and Places

Support safer, cleaner and more resilient communities, protect countryside and coast, and encourage community pride.

5

Running an Efficient and Effective Council

Challenge waste, improve productivity, strengthen accountability and make every pound work harder.

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