Norfolk County Councils Deep Disappointment at Government Decision to Halt Mayoral Election and Slash Devolution Funding

Norfolk County Council has expressed serious concern following the Labour Government's announcement that the planned 2026 mayoral election for the Norfolk & Suffolk Combined County Authority will be deferred until 2028. The sudden decision means that Norfolk would now receive only around one-third of the investment previously promised under the devolution programme.

The Council warns that this move represents a significant setback for Norfolk's communities, economy, and long-term growth plans, undermining years of preparatory work and delaying projects vital to local residents.

Funding Cut - a Major Blow for Norfolk

The reduction in Government support, down to a fraction of the original multi-year commitment, threatens progress in key areas including:

- transport and infrastructure improvements
- skills and employment programmes
- housing development
- local growth and regeneration projects

This decision is a major blow to the county, noting that the previous investment package had been carefully negotiated to deliver benefits across both rural and urban communities.

The Council also raised concerns about the lack of consultation prior to the announcement and the disruption caused to ongoing work with partners, businesses and local authorities across the region.

Norfolk County Council Taking Action

Despite the disappointment, the Council is taking immediate steps to secure the best possible outcome for Norfolk. Actions underway include:

- Seeking urgent clarification from ministers on why the promised investment has been significantly reduced
- Pressing for guarantees that long-term funding will be reinstated and protected
- Reviewing all implications for Norfolk's infrastructure, transport and economic strategies
- Engaging with district, parish and community partners to assess local impacts
- Preparing a formal response outlining how the decision risks holding Norfolk back compared with other regions

Meetings are being held during December with government Ministers to see if there is any room for negotiation on the above.

Have your say on the future of local government in Norfolk

Residents across Norfolk can now take part in a landmark Government consultation that will help shape the future of local government in the county.

The Government is seeking views on proposals for one, two or three brand new unitary councils in Norfolk.

Under these proposals, existing county and district councils would be replaced by new unitary authorities, meaning residents would have a single council responsible for all services in their area.

Norfolk County Council's submission proposes one unitary council for Norfolk: a single organisation responsible for all local government services, designed to improve outcomes for residents, reduce duplication and deliver long-term financial sustainability.

The consultation runs from Wednesday 19th November 2025 to Sunday 11th January 2026. All proposals and an online response form are available on the consultation website - https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/norfolksuffolk/consultation/

Support is also available at any of Norfolk's 47 libraries, where residents can access free computers, Wi-Fi and staff assistance to complete the consultation online.

Benefits of one unitary council for Norfolk 1. Major Financial Savings

- Creates **large recurring savings** (around **£36–40 million per year**) by removing duplicated roles, buildings, systems and management across eight councils.
- Delivers a faster **payback on reorganisation costs** — savings expected to outweigh set-up costs within about **one year**.
- Frees up money to be redirected from administration into **frontline services**, helping protect priority areas like social care, highways, and children's services.

2. Simpler, Clearer Services (One Front Door)

- Residents deal with **one council** instead of navigating county vs district responsibilities.
- Makes it easier for people to access services, report issues and get consistent responses.

- Removes the “postcode lottery” by ensuring **one standard of service** and more consistent Council Tax across Norfolk.

3. More Joined-Up Service Delivery

- Integrates related services (e.g. **housing + social care**, **waste + environmental health**) currently split between separate councils.
- Avoids fragmentation of critical services such as adult social care, children’s services, and transport.
- Improves coordination with partners like the NHS and police, who already operate county-wide.

4. Stronger Strategic Leadership & Stability

- A single, county-wide authority provides a clearer voice when negotiating for investment and devolved powers.
- Gives Norfolk greater capacity to plan long-term, respond to pressures, and remain financially resilient.

Norfolk County Council Encourages Parish and Town Councils to Bid for Local Improvements Through Parish Partnership Scheme

Norfolk County Council is inviting parish and town councils across the county to apply for funding through its **Parish Partnership Scheme**, which supports community-led improvements to highways and local infrastructure.

The scheme, now a well-established part of Norfolk’s approach to supporting local communities, offers **50% match-funding** for a wide range of small-scale projects that make local areas safer, more accessible and better connected. A total fund of **£848,702** is available for the 2025/26 round.

The Parish Partnership Scheme enables local councils to deliver projects that might otherwise be unaffordable, including:

- New or improved **bus shelters** and bus-stop facilities
- **Village gateways**, signage and speed-awareness measures
- **Trod footpaths** and other low-cost pedestrian routes
- **School-zone safety** improvements, including advisory 20mph signs
- Enhancements to **public rights of way**, crossings, and local walking routes

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points** in suitable community locations

By combining local contributions with County Council funding, parishes can make meaningful improvements that directly reflect their community's priorities. Councils can also use other sources such as CIL or developer contributions to meet their matchfunding share.

The scheme welcomes bids from parishes of all sizes, including first-time applicants and smaller rural councils. Norfolk County Council works closely with local Highway Engineers and the Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC) to support parishes through the bidding and delivery process.

Parish and town councils interested in applying are encouraged to begin discussions locally and contact their Highways Engineer for early advice on feasibility and costs.

Norfolk's gritting vehicles head out on their first run of the season

Norfolk's gritting fleet has completed its first run of the winter season. Over recent years, all Norfolk gritters have been upgraded with state-of-the-art autosalting technology to improve accuracy, save time and reduce waste. And thanks to Norfolk's schoolchildren and local residents, all 55 vehicles now proudly carry their own names, so keep an eye out for *Edith Gravel*, *Grit Yarmouth* and *Gritty Gritty Bang Bang*, to name just a few.

Follow #NorfolkWinter and Norfolk County Council on Facebook, Nextdoor and Instagram for updates throughout the season.

Residents can check this year's gritting routes using the online map at the council's website.

Last winter, teams completed 66 full gritting runs between November and March. Each run treated around 2,200 miles of road—the equivalent of travelling from Norwich to Istanbul and back. In total, crews covered 145,200 miles (almost six times around the Earth) and spread approximately 14,800 tonnes of salt, around the weight of 2,500 elephants.

Norfolk's routes include all A and B roads, and selected C roads focusing on commuter routes, key bus corridors and village access. Services are delivered by Norse Highways. The A11 and A47 are gritted by National Highways.

New support service launched as Norfolk faces rising redundancies

Norfolk County Council is developing an integrated support package in response to a report warning that the county may face up to 15,000 redundancies over the next few years.

The 12-month pilot will create an online portal where businesses and employees can access both local and national support when redundancy risks arise. Individuals needing more detailed help will be referred to specialist services offering tailored one-to-one assistance.

Major announcements this year include up to 550 job losses at Lotus Cars and a potential further 350 at the NHS Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board.

During the 2020 recession, 750,000 job losses were recorded nationally. Although no local figure was available, Norfolk typically accounts for around 2% of the national picture— equating to the projected 15,000 local job losses.

Businesses report that increased employer NI contributions, rises in the minimum wage and new Day 1 employment rights (including for parental leave and sick pay) are all placing pressure on budgets and staffing levels.

Connect to Work: Supporting over 4,000 people facing barriers to employment People in Norfolk with disabilities or long-term health conditions that prevent them from working will receive tailored support through the new Connect to Work programme.

Building on the success of Working Well Norfolk and the Local Supported Employment projects, the programme aims to reduce Norfolk's higher-than-average rate of economic inactivity.

In 2024, 109,100 people (20.6%) aged 16–65 in Norfolk were economically inactive— 1.5% higher than post-Covid levels. 30,100 (27.7%) were living with long-term sickness, above both regional and national averages.

Connect to Work will support residents aged 18+ (and in some cases 16–17) across a wide range of groups, including people with physical and mental health challenges, learning disabilities, neurodiversity, care leavers, carers, veterans, ex-offenders, refugees, the homeless and victims of domestic abuse. Those already in work but at risk of leaving due to health or other challenges will also be supported.

Funded by the UK Government, the programme will be delivered by Norfolk County Council in partnership with Future Projects, Norfolk and Waveney MIND, Seetec, Shaw Trust and Standguide, reaching more than 4,000 people.

To access support, visit norfolk.gov.uk/workingwell or email connecttowork@norfolk.gov.uk.

Norfolk makes early progress towards long-term economic ambitions

Norfolk is taking significant strides towards its long-term economic goals, with progress underway across key sectors including agri-food, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and digital technology.

Recent milestones include the launch of an Immersive Visualisation and Simulation Lab at Norwich University of the Arts, designed to boost jobs in the digital tech sector, and the installation of Gigabit Fibre broadband to 7,000 premises across the county.

The Norfolk Business Board's 2024–2029 Action Plan sets out how partners will deliver the region's shared economic strategy. The Plan will help coordinate activity, support investment, and demonstrate Norfolk's commitment to seizing new economic opportunities and addressing barriers to inclusive growth.

Gigabit Fibre rollout is a key part of the Plan. Combined with commercial broadband programmes, it will significantly reduce connectivity "cold spots". To date, 7,000 premises have been upgraded, with more than 80,000 set to benefit from the Government's £128m investment.

Keeping people in Norfolk safe at home this winter

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is sharing essential advice to help keep residents safe at home this winter.

Start by completing a free online home fire safety check at norfolk.gov.uk/fire. Elderly and vulnerable residents may also be eligible for a free in-person home visit—eligibility details are available on the website.

Key winter safety advice includes:

- Ensure working smoke alarms are installed on every floor and test them regularly.
- Keep portable heaters at least one metre from people and flammable items. Never use them to dry clothes, switch them off overnight and check regularly for damage.
- Buy heaters only from reputable retailers.
- If you use emollients, avoid smoking or going near open flames, heaters or hobs— residue on clothing and bedding is highly flammable.
- Have chimneys professionally swept before use.
- Never leave candles unattended; switch off Christmas lights when leaving home or going to bed.
- Avoid overloading plug sockets and do not use block adaptors—use power boards instead.
- Check electric blankets and heated throws for damage; never use them with hot water bottles.
- Inspect hot water bottles: the flower symbol shows the date of manufacture. Replace after two years and check regularly for wear, as damaged bottles can cause serious burns.

More advice and safety checks are available at norfolk.gov.uk/fire.

Keeping Norfolk Moving: Seasonal roadworks restrictions in Norwich

To help keep the city moving during the busy festive season, Norfolk County Council will restrict roadworks on key routes into and within central Norwich.

From next week, the number of works on main routes and the inner ring road will be significantly reduced. Only essential emergency works by utility companies will be permitted and will be strictly monitored.

Current improvement schemes are also being wrapped up ahead of Christmas. Temporary lights at the Holt Road/airport junction have been removed, and works at Marl Pitt Lane/Dereham Road and the Harford Park and Ride/Ipswich Road bus lane will be completed within the week.

With National Highways' ongoing works at Thickthorn and along the A47 continuing over the festive period, pausing council-managed works in the city will help minimise disruption.

Traffic and parking demand is always high at this time of year. Residents and visitors are encouraged to consider alternative travel options, including Norwich's excellent Park and Ride service. A full double-decker bus can remove up to 75 cars from the road, easing congestion for everyone.

New Tap On Tap Off payment technology on Norfolk's buses

Norfolk County Council and First Bus have partnered to introduce Tap On Tap Off (TOTO) contactless payment across all First Bus services in Norfolk from Sunday 23 November.

The enhanced system, installed across the fleet of 240 vehicles, has been funded through £465,000 awarded to Norfolk's bus operators via the Department for Transport as part of the county's Bus Service Improvement Plan.

TOTO offers passengers greater flexibility and value, charging only for the journeys taken and automatically capping at the best available day fare, with further savings for frequent weekly travel.

Full details are available from First Bus.

Nature recovery roadmap launched for Norfolk and Suffolk

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have published their respective Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)—a major step towards addressing the region's decline in nature, identifying opportunities for recovery and delivering wider benefits such as reduced flood risk.

The strategies were launched on Thursday 6th November at Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve, with contributions from partners involved in shaping and supporting nature recovery work.

The two councils have worked closely together through the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership to identify shared themes, challenges and opportunities for restoring nature across the region.