One council for Norfolk is best for residents and services, report says

A new report from Norfolk County Council shows that replacing the county's eight existing councils with a single unitary authority could save £36.2 million annually, enough to repay the £33.7 million setup cost within just one year.

The draft options appraisal, developed in response to Government plans to streamline local government in England, highlights the financial and service benefits of a single council model. It finds that:

- **A single council would deliver the highest savings**—£36.2 million per year—by reducing duplication, cutting senior roles, and achieving economies of scale.
- **Two or three councils would cost more** to set up (£43.2 million and £50.2 million respectively) and would either take years to break even or never recover the investment.
- **Ongoing costs of splitting services** like adult social care and highways could reach up to £33.6 million per year under a three-council model.
- By 2040, two or three councils would cost between £10 million and £31 million more per year than a single council.
- **The west of Norfolk could face a funding shortfall** of up to £21.1 million annually under multi-council options, raising serious concerns about financial sustainability.

The report also warns that dividing services between councils could lead to duplication, inefficiencies, and risks to vulnerable residents who rely on county-wide support.

Norfolk County Council is proposing a single unitary council as its preferred option and will be submitting its findings to Government as part of the national reform process.

Norfolk County Council Approves £500k Community Fund to Boost Local Projects

Norfolk County Council has approved the launch of a new £500k Norfolk Community Fund for 2025/26, aimed at supporting grassroots projects that strengthen communities and improve local wellbeing.

The fund will empower local voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) groups to apply for grants between £200 and £2,500 to deliver small-scale initiatives that bring people together, promote inclusion, and enhance quality of life. Each of the county's 84 councillors will be allocated £5,000 to distribute within their divisions, ensuring funding reaches every corner of Norfolk

The fund responds to growing pressures on the VCSE sector, highlighted in the recent State of the Sector Survey, and builds on the success of previous schemes like the Norfolk Parish Partnership. It will also encourage match funding through crowdfunding, potentially doubling the impact to £1 million

The 2025–26 programme will prioritise projects that support ageing well, youth engagement, community cohesion, and cultural connection.

For more information on how to apply, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk.

Norfolk County Council issues over £685,000 in fines for non-compliant road works

In 2024/25, Norfolk County Council issued over 44,000 street and roadwork permits, with 75% linked to utility companies and developers. Although the Council coordinates works, 79 utility firms have legal rights to dig up roads, limiting local control.

Around 7,000 permits were for emergency works, often the most disruptive, and 5,400 applications were rejected. The Council issued 2,809 Fixed Penalty Notices for permit breaches, raising nearly £340,000. A further £345,000 came from 306 overrunning works, causing 1,317 days of disruption.

Two utility companies were successfully prosecuted, resulting in nearly £100,000 in court fines and full costs awarded to the Council.

New Support Package Launched for Norfolk's Rural High Streets

Norfolk County Council has launched a new support package to boost rural high streets, with 100 businesses across eight pilot towns set to join a new Retail Excellence programme this summer and winter.

The initiative, part of the High Streets Matter campaign, aims to build business skills, increase footfall, and strengthen community pride. It includes:

- Retail Excellence programme in Dereham, Diss, Fakenham, North Walsham, Attleborough, Aylsham, Gorleston-on-Sea, and Hunstanton.
- A follow-up High Growth programme for 12 standout businesses.
- Pride of Place funding for community-led projects promoting local high streets.
- Access to a digital retail toolkit, the Go Digital programme, and a Market Towns Conference in October.

The programme builds on successful pilots like the *Love Your Market Town* scheme and responds to national calls for greater support for small firms.

For more information, visit **the High Streets Matter webpages.** or email nhsm@norfolk.gov.uk.

New Campaign Helps Older Drivers Stay Safe Behind the Wheel

Norfolk County Council has launched a new campaign Drive Safe to help older drivers stay confident and safe on the road for longer.

In partnership with Norfolk Police, Fire and Rescue, and the East of England Ambulance Service, the campaign encourages drivers to reflect on how health changes may affect driving and to seek support early.

Key features include:

- Free workshops and drop-ins
- One-to-one support
- The GOLD course – a one-hour, tailored driving session with an approved instructor
- A new online hub with videos, tips, and booking info

With over 25% of Norfolk's population aged 65+, and a rise in collisions involving older drivers, the campaign aims to ensure people can continue driving safely and independently.

More than 2,000 people have already accessed the new resources since the launch in April. Visit http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/drivesafe to learn more.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Delivers Record Number of Home Safety Visits

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has completed a record 8,164 Home Fire Safety Visits between April 2024 and April 2025, a 139% increase on the previous year.

These free visits help residents reduce fire risks and improve wellbeing, especially for older people living alone or with limited mobility. The service also connects residents to wider support, including social care and mental health services.

Advice included in the visits is:

- To make sure you have a working smoke alarm on each floor of your home and that it is tested regularly (Test it Tuesday)
- To plan an escape route for your home in the event of fire and make sure everyone is familiar with it

- To leave your house at the first sign of fire, stay out and call 999. Do not try and fight the fire yourself
- Promoting safe use of portable heaters - to stay at least one metre away and never to dry clothes on the heaters or obstruct them in any way
- To charge devices safely on flat surfaces when you are awake and at home, always using the charger that was bought with your device or a replacement recommended by the retailer

To refer someone for a Home Fire Safety Visit,
visit: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/firesafetycheck

New Support for Norfolk Parent Carers Through Council and Charity Partnership

Norfolk County Council has partnered with national charity Kids to enhance support for parents caring for children with disabilities or additional needs.

The new service offers:

- One-to-one support
- Specialist workshops
- The 'Healthy Parent Carer' programme
- Coffee mornings and drop-in sessions

This support complements the Council's refreshed parent carer needs assessments, which help identify the impact of caring responsibilities and connect families with tailored guidance and services.

Kids, which has over 50 years' experience supporting families, is now delivering the service across Norfolk.

To learn more or request support, visit the **parent carer needs assessment page**.

Norfolk County Council to Host Free Electric Vehicle Showcase in Norwich

Norfolk County Council is inviting residents and businesses to explore the future of transport at Travel Norfolk, Travel Electric, a free event celebrating electric vehicles (EVs), taking place at The Forum, Norwich, on Friday 18th July.

Held in partnership with Let's Experience Electric, the event will feature:

- Test Drives – Try out the latest electric cars and bikes

- Expert Talks – Hear from leaders driving Norfolk's EV revolution
- Networking – Meet EV users, businesses, and dealers
- Advice & Exhibits – Get guidance on switching to electric and see success stories in action

The event follows the installation of 47 new EV charging points in Norwich and the announcement of £6.47 million in government funding through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme to expand access to charging for residents without off-street parking.

A full agenda and exhibitor list will be announced soon.

Single-Use Vapes to Be Banned in Norfolk from 1st June

From Sunday 1st June, it was illegal to sell or supply single-use vapes in Norfolk, as new national regulations came into force.

The ban, part of the Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) Regulations 2024, aims to reduce fire risks from lithium-ion batteries and tackle environmental damage caused by disposable plastics and nicotine waste.

Businesses must ensure all vapes sold are refillable, rechargeable, and replaceable, and must offer a take-back service for safe disposal. Enforcement action for non-compliance may include fines, product seizures, or prosecution.

Norfolk's 19 recycling centres offer dedicated bins for vape and battery disposal from households.

For business guidance and resources, visit the government's single-use vapes ban page or contact Norfolk Trading Standards at 0344 800 8020.