Councillors back new devolved powers and funding to boost jobs and growth

New powers and funding to boost jobs, transport, housing and growth are coming to Norfolk and Suffolk, after councillors voted in favour. Following a discussion at full council Norfolk County Council's cabinet voted in favour of proceeding with devolution,

Under the Government's devolution priority programme, Norfolk and Suffolk have been offered:

- The transfer of powers and funding from Whitehall, to enable decisions on jobs, skills, transport and housing to be taken in Norfolk and Suffolk
- A multi-million pound investment fund for 30 years, to spend on local priorities

The decision means that the new devolved powers and funding would be overseen by a mayor, elected by voters in May 2026, to lead a new combined authority. The combined authority would be made up of the mayor, plus councillors from Norfolk and Suffolk.

The mayor and the combined authority will take responsibility for a range of functions and funding, including:

- Local transport
- Skills and jobs
- Housing development
- Economic growth and regeneration
- Environment and climate change
- From 2027 - taking on police and crime commissioner and fire and rescue authority functions

Positives of Devolution for Norfolk and Suffolk

1. Greater Local Control and Tailored Solutions

- Devolution will empower local leaders to make strategic decisions closer to the communities they serve, rather than relying on central government. This enables more responsive, integrated, and locally relevant public services.

2. Significant Long-Term Investment

- The establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) will unlock an investment fund of £37.4 million per year for 30 years, over £1.1 billion in total. This provides long-term financial certainty and autonomy for planning and delivering place-based projects, reducing reliance on short-term, competitive funding pots.

3. Economic Growth and Resilience

- Devolution enables the development of tailored economic strategies, boosting productivity, attracting inward investment, and supporting local businesses. It also allows for the creation of innovation hubs, infrastructure projects, and skills programmes that are specific to local needs.

4. Improved Transport and Infrastructure

- The new authority will have powers over local transport planning, bus franchising, and the ability to coordinate a Key Route Network. This should lead to more consistent and strategic transport policies, better integration, and targeted investment where it delivers the greatest impact.

5. Skills and Employment

- Control over adult skills funding will be devolved, allowing the region to tailor skills provision to local economic needs, target key sectors, and increase access to lifelong learning. This flexibility should help address skills shortages and support economic growth.

6. Housing and Regeneration

- Devolution brings new powers to accelerate housing delivery and regeneration, including direct partnerships with Homes England and the ability to allocate housing and regeneration grants locally. This should help address local housing needs more effectively.

7. Environment and Climate Change

- The authority will have a role in regional energy planning, heat network zoning, and local nature recovery strategies. This enables more coordinated action on decarbonisation, energy security, and environmental protection

8. Health, Wellbeing, and Public Service Reform

- There will be a statutory duty to improve health and reduce inequalities, with the Mayor and CCA required to factor health outcomes into every decision. This should lead to more joined-up approaches to public health and social care.

9. Public Safety

- The Mayor will take on Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority functions, aligning public safety governance with other devolved powers for more integrated service delivery.

10. Enhanced Local Voice and Influence

- Devolution gives the region a seat on the Council of Nations and Regions, amplifying the local voice in national policy-making and ensuring regional priorities are heard and acted upon.

11. General Power of Competence

- The Strategic Authority and Mayor will have a general power of competence, allowing them to innovate and act in the public interest, provided actions are not prohibited by law.

12. Inclusive Growth and Equality

- The Equality Impact Assessment highlights that devolution can be used as a catalyst to embed 'accessible by design' in new strategies and services, better aligning them to the needs of vulnerable and protected groups, and reducing inequalities.

You can find out more about devolution at **www.norfolk.gov.uk/devolution**.

New Norfolk-wide highways contract awarded with strong focus on boosting local skills and employment

Norfolk County Council has appointed Kier as its new long-term contractor responsible for the maintenance and construction of the county's highway network.

Kier will deliver a comprehensive programme of highways maintenance and improvement, including road resurfacing and surface dressing, bridge works, drainage and the delivery of new transport infrastructure.

As part of the contract, Kier will invest significantly in its existing site in Wymondham, upgrading facilities to reduce energy consumption and support the latest in sustainable construction and materials innovation, which will benefit the wider Norfolk economy.

A key feature of Kier's approach to the contract will be its commitment to local skills and employment. At any given time, Kier will employ at least 15 apprentices, providing structured training, professional qualifications, and career pathways for young people across Norfolk.

The company will also run an annual 10-week programme for young people in care and care leavers, offering taster sessions, work experience, and employability skills, with support from supply chain partners.

Give Norfolk County Council your views on fire and rescue priorities

A public consultation on Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service's safety and risk plans for the next five years has gone live.

Residents, businesses and organisations now have an opportunity to feedback on areas the service has identified as priorities for 2026-2031, to mitigate risk and keep our county as safe as possible.

Eight proposals have been put out for the public to comment on, around the areas of:

- Road safety
- Prevention activity
- Building safety
- Preparing for and responding to emergencies
- Responding to climate change (specifically extreme weather risks such as flooding and wildfire)
- Supporting our people
- Fire station improvements
- Responding to medical emergencies

Details of the eight proposals are below. The public can fill in an online survey via **www.norfolk.gov.uk/crmp** to respond.

CRMP Proposal 1

Working to Improve Road safety: We will play a more active role in Norfolk's Road Safety Partnerships to analyse data and coordinate action to reduce the occurrence and impact of collisions on our county's roads.

CRMP Proposal 2

Focussing on prevention: We will work within Community Safety Partnerships to further focus on vulnerable groups, including children and young people. We will increase our early intervention activities, developing resilience in our communities and improving outcomes.

CRMP Proposal 3

Ensuring better Building Safety: We will prioritise inspection and engagement activity for the highest risk buildings in Norfolk, effectively applying legislation across relevant residential and commercial buildings to keep people safe in their homes, at work and during their leisure activities.

CRMP Proposal 4

Enhancing our Response: We will review how we locate and deploy our assets and resources to optimise how we train for, and respond to, emergencies.

CRMP Proposal 5

Responding to Climate Change: We will review our extreme weather response, specifically water and wildfire capability, to mitigate the impact of these incidents. We will continue to lobby government to make water and flood response a statutory duty for all Fire and Rescue Services in England.

CRMP Proposal 6

Supporting our People: We will continue to further develop our high performing and inclusive culture; supporting our staff to be skilled, healthy and engaged, and empowering them to uphold the highest professional standards that our communities expect.

CRMP Proposal 7

Providing Fit for Purpose Fire Stations: We will secure long term investment in our fire stations, so firefighters are protected from contaminants and facilities are fit for a modern workforce.

CRMP Proposal 8

Responding to Life Threatening Medical Emergencies: We will continue to develop our work with East of England Ambulance Service Trust around Emergency Medical Response to improve outcomes for our communities.

Norfolk's budget consultation - Have your say

As the county council's annual budget consultation has launched, people are being urged to take a look at the proposals and have their say.

The county council is working to set a balanced budget, despite the need to save £41.6m in 2026-27.

This year there are 50 budget saving proposals, and proposals to increase council tax, which provides a large part of the funding the county council needs.

These proposed savings add up to £35.7m - which would make a big contribution to the overall amount that needs to be saved.

To help deal with cost pressures and invest in vital services, the current budget planning for 2026-27 is based on an assumption to increase council tax.

Three options are being considered:

- An increase of 3%
- An increase of up to 5%
- An increase of more than 5%

People can find out more and have their say at **www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget**.

The consultation opens on Monday 27 October and closes on Monday 15 December 2025.

'It's never too late': Norfolk County Council is supporting healthy ageing

Looking after your health as you get older is not just a recommendation - it's a vital investment in your future quality of life. Evidence shows that staying physically active, keeping up with recommended vaccinations and screenings, and maintaining social connections are among the strongest predictors of how well you age. These actions play a direct role in preventing illnesses, reducing the risk of falls and long-term conditions, and supporting mental wellbeing.

Norfolk is home to one of the highest ageing populations in the UK. Now, the county council's Public Health department has launched a new campaign to encourage residents aged 50 and over to prioritise their health so they can live healthier, more connected lives as they age.

The campaign is centred around a brand **new Healthy Ageing subsite**, called 'It's never too late', which highlights resources, guidance and opportunities to help residents make positive changes to their health and wellbeing.

This includes:

- Protecting your health: information on vaccination eligibility and booking, NHS screening appointments, and NHS health checks.
- Being active: information on moving more, strength and balance, falls prevention, and finding local groups.
- Feeling connected: finding clubs, groups and one-to-one support, building new connections, and practical guidance on transport and digital skills.

To explore the new webpage and find out more, visit **www.norfolk.gov.uk/healthyageing**.

Major refurbishment announced for Millennium Library to mark 25-year anniversary

Norwich's Millennium Library is set to undergo a £1m transformation in 2026, marking 25 years since it first opened its doors.

The refurbishment has been shaped by extensive feedback from library users and will include a re-designed early years library as well as new homes for both the 8+ and teen library areas, each with their own identity. There are also plans for a bookshop-style entrance for easy browsing and an increase in study space, primarily on the first floor.

Accessibility has been a key part of the design with lower shelving units throughout the library and improved signage and wayfinding.

Visitors can also look forward to improved lighting, new furniture with built-in power points and a new gathering space for events and talks.

Work is scheduled to begin next year. While some disruption to services is expected during the refurbishment, full details will be shared closer to the time.

Norfolk bucking national trend for recruiting adoptive parents

Norfolk is bucking the national trend for recruiting adopters, with the numbers of adopters increasing in the county.

Across the country, there are 12% fewer families considering adoption this year compared to last, whereas in the year 24/25, Norfolk County Council's Adoption Service recruited 43 adoptive households - a 53% increase on the number of adopters who were approved in 23/24.

Of these 43 households, 37 were couples and six were single adopters. The council has also seen an increase in adopters from global majority backgrounds and from the LGBTQ+ community.

The news comes as the county marks National Adoption Week, with this year's focus being on busting the misconceptions about who can adopt.

People considering whether adoption is right for them are invited to contact Norfolk Adoption Services on **01603 638343** for a friendly chat and invitation to an information event where they can find out more.