

Parish Report – June 2025

Cllr Andrew Jamieson

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. This, of course, would be in addition to the annual savings of around £60 million a year that are made across the County. Strategic and operational efficiencies are far less difficult to achieve at scale. So an estimated £50million plus revenue gap in west Norfolk's £600m gross budget would quickly lead to lost non statutory services, sharply increased council taxes or both.

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

Last month I announced the launch of a new £500k Norfolk Community Fund for 2025/26. I conceived it as a way of answering requests from local voluntary, community, parish and

social enterprise projects in my patch, aimed at supporting grassroots projects that strengthen communities and improve local wellbeing.

Groups can 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 builds on the success of previous schemes like the Norfolk Parish Partnership and the Local Members Fund to bring cash down into the local community. It will also encourage match funding through crowdfunding, potentially doubling the impact to £1 million

The Fund will be running from July 1st and I will distribute leaflets shortly; meanwhile, or 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

Many people have commented on the amount of times they find roads dug up in Norfolk. 75% of these are linked to utilities companies and developers. Extraordinarily, the Council has no power to limit these works as utility firms have the right to repair their equipment immediately. This was entirely reasonable when we dealt with, maybe, a dozen utilities focussed on key services: water, gas and the like. However, with 79 utility companies, cable and so forth, also now having this authority, it has become very hard for NCC to expedite their co-ordinating role. As a result we are significantly increasing the amount of fines issued for use of these powers for non emergency work and for over running repairwork. In 2024/25, Norfolk County Council issued over 44,000 street and roadwork permits, with 75% linked to utility companies and developers. £685,000 fines have been raised and the Council is insisting on better coordination where it can. As I say, however, with 79 utility firms having the legal rights to dig up roads, local control is limited. Norfolk County Council is working with local MP's to get regulations tightened.

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.

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.