

# County Councillor Update **APPENDIX 2**

**July 2026**

Here's a detailed update on some of the key issues and activity from the past month.

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## **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Update**

Local Government Reorganisation remains one of the most significant issues facing Norfolk, with long-term implications for how services are delivered, how decisions are made, and how residents interact with local government. In March 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed the Government's intention to replace the current two-tier model—consisting of Norfolk County Council alongside district, borough and city councils—with three new unitary authorities: Greater Norwich Council, East Norfolk Council, and West Norfolk Council. These changes are subject to Parliamentary approval via a Structural Changes Order, with an indicative implementation date of April 2028.

This decision followed consultation and competing proposals from across the county. Norfolk County Council had put forward a proposal for a single unitary authority, based on the view that it would provide clearer accountability, reduce duplication of services, and deliver stronger financial resilience over time. In contrast, most district councils supported a three-unitary model, arguing it would preserve more local identity and balance.

Concerns continue to be raised about the Government's preferred model. These include questions around financial sustainability—particularly whether smaller unitary councils will have sufficient capacity to deliver services effectively—as well as the challenge of serving large, rural geographies such as West Norfolk. There are also concerns about disruption during transition and the potential duplication of services that could arise within a three-authority structure.

## **Judicial Review Developments**

On **25 June 2026**, Norfolk County Council formally submitted an application for a judicial review to the High Court, challenging the Government's decision-making process. This followed a pre-action protocol letter issued earlier in June. As part of this approach, the Council has paused non-essential work relating to the implementation of reorganisation, pending the outcome of the legal process.

Other authorities have also raised concerns, with South Norfolk Council pursuing or signalling legal action, and similar challenges being considered across neighbouring counties. The judicial review is currently at an early stage. The Court must first decide whether to grant permission for the case to proceed. If permission is granted, the matter would move to a full hearing examining whether the correct procedures were followed in reaching the Government's decision.

It is important to note that judicial review does not reconsider the merits of a policy, but instead focuses on whether the process leading to that decision was lawful, fair, and reasonable.

## **Next Steps and Implications**

The outcome of the judicial review may have a significant impact on the overall timetable for Local Government Reorganisation, potentially delaying or reshaping the process. At present, there remains a degree of uncertainty, and it is possible that further changes or revisions could arise following the legal process.

Any future reorganisation would have a direct impact on local services, including highways, planning, waste collection, and council tax arrangements. I will continue to monitor developments closely, ensuring that the interests of residents and parish councils are represented and that clear updates are provided as more information becomes available.

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## **Local Issues**

Over the past month, I have continued to work with residents and parish councils on a range of local issues, with a particular focus on highways, infrastructure, and planning-related matters.

### **Highways and Infrastructure**

Highways remain one of the most frequently raised areas of concern across rural divisions. Issues typically raised include road safety, speeding, road surface conditions, drainage, and signage.

Much of this work involves ongoing liaison with Norfolk Highways officers to ensure that reported concerns are reviewed, prioritised, and where possible addressed.

Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs), often required for emergency works such as utility repairs, continue to cause disruption in some areas. While these are necessary for safety reasons, there is an ongoing need to ensure that communication with residents is clear and timely, particularly in smaller communities where alternative routes may be limited.

There is also continued demand for improvements around school safety, particularly at pick-up and drop-off times. These concerns are being fed into ongoing discussions with highways officers, with a view to identifying proportionate and effective solutions in rural settings.

### **Local Member Funding (LMF)**

A recent decision has been taken to change the way Local Member Funding is allocated. Rather than being distributed as discretionary funding for individual members to allocate locally, resources are now being directed towards wider strategic priorities—specifically highways investment and support for Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service.

This represents a shift in approach. While the intention is to deliver broader infrastructure improvements at scale, it does mean that the smaller, locally driven projects historically supported through LMF may no longer be able to access that funding in the same way. I am acutely aware that this will be disappointing news in some regards, however it should actually ensure that the back log of jobs can be cleared sooner in addition to allowing better value for money.

## **Police and Crime Panel – Substitute Member Role**

In addition to my responsibilities as a County Councillor, I have also been appointed as a **substitute member of the Police and Crime Panel**, which plays an important role in the governance and accountability of policing across Norfolk.

The Police and Crime Panel is responsible for scrutinising the work of the **Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)**. While the Commissioner is responsible for setting policing priorities, budgets and strategy, the Panel provides essential democratic oversight to ensure that decisions are transparent, effective, and reflect the needs of local communities.

## What the Role Involves

As a substitute member, I step in to attend Panel meetings where required and participate fully in its work. The Panel's responsibilities include:

- Reviewing the **Police and Crime Plan**, which sets the priorities for policing across the county
- Scrutinising decisions made by the Commissioner, including financial decisions and commissioning of services
- Considering the **policing budget and council tax precept**, ensuring value for money for residents
- Holding the Commissioner to account through questioning and challenge
- Reviewing complaints relating to the Commissioner where appropriate

The Panel does not manage the police or direct operational decisions, but instead ensures that there is appropriate oversight, transparency, and accountability within the system.

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## Relevance to Local Communities

While much of the Panel's work is strategic, it has a direct link to issues that matter locally, including:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Rural crime
- Road safety enforcement
- Community policing presence

Through this role, I am able to raise and reflect concerns that are coming from residents and parish councils, ensuring that they are considered at a county-wide level.

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## Wider Importance

Effective scrutiny of policing is essential to maintaining public confidence. The Panel provides a mechanism to ensure that:

- Local concerns are heard

- Public money is spent appropriately
- Policing priorities reflect community needs

## County Council Updates

### SEND Reform Plan

Norfolk County Council has submitted its SEND Reform Plan to Government, setting out how support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities will be improved over the coming years. This forms part of a wider national reform programme and represents the first phase of what is expected to be an evolving system.

The plan builds on work already underway through Norfolk's Local First Inclusion programme, which aims to enable more children to be supported within mainstream educational settings, closer to home and their communities. This is supported by a "Team Around the School" approach, bringing together specialist professionals to support early identification and intervention.

Over the next three years, the plan sets out a number of priorities, including expanding specialist support within mainstream schools, increasing capacity in specialist provision where required, and strengthening mental health support services. There is also a focus on improving outcomes for young people transitioning into further education, employment or training.

A key aspect of the plan is its financial context. If approved by Government, Norfolk could receive funding to address approximately £195 million in historic SEND-related deficit, providing much-needed stability to the system. However, delivery of the plan will depend heavily on national funding, workforce capacity, and effective partnership working across sectors.

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### Crisis and Resilience Grant Programme

Norfolk County Council has launched a new grant programme as part of the Government-funded Crisis and Resilience Fund, designed to support residents experiencing financial hardship while also building longer-term resilience within communities.

The programme makes available grants between £50,000 and £200,000 for voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations to deliver projects that help prevent people from reaching crisis point. The emphasis is on early intervention, reducing financial pressures, improving access to advice and support, and strengthening local networks.

While parish councils are not eligible to apply directly, they can play an important role in promoting the fund locally and supporting community groups to bring forward strong applications. The deadline for applications is **13 September 2026**, with decisions expected in October.

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### Wider National and Policy Developments

Recent national developments include reforms to HM Treasury's Green Book, which will place greater emphasis on place-based investment proposals. This may provide opportunities for rural areas to strengthen funding bids by presenting joined-up cases across infrastructure, housing, and services.

In addition, new initiatives such as the Youth Jobs Grant aim to support employment opportunities for young people, while changes introduced under the Crime and Policing Act 2026 provide enhanced powers to address anti-social behaviour.

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## **Council Business**

Recent council business has focused on a range of key issues, including budget pressures, SEND reform, infrastructure investment, and the implications of Local Government Reorganisation. I have continued to contribute to these discussions, ensuring that the impact on rural communities and parish councils is taken into account.

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## **Community Engagement**

Over the past month, I have continued to engage with parish councils, community organisations, and residents across the division. These discussions remain an important part of understanding local priorities and ensuring that concerns are raised appropriately within the County Council.

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## **Keeping in Touch**

If you have any questions, concerns, or issues you would like me to look into, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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**Kind regards**

**Cllr Lee Jarvis**

County Councillor

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