

Norfolk County Council

## *County Councillor Report – Cllr Callum Ringer*

*Serving the parishes of: Alby with Thwaite; Aldborough and Thurgarton; Antingham; Aylmerton; Baconsthorpe; Bessingham; Bodham; Colby with Banningham; Corpusty and Saxthorpe; East Beckham; Erpingham with Calthorpe and Ingworth; Felbrigg; Felmingham; Gimingham; Gresham; Hanworth; Hempstead; Ingworth; Itteringham; Little Barningham; Matlaske; Metton; Plumstead; Roughton; Southrepps; Suffield; Sustead; Thorpe Market; West Beckham; Wickmere*

## September 2026

**Councillor Surgeries**

I am planning to hold regular councillor surgeries around the Erpingham division, moving them between different villages so that residents have opportunities to come and speak to me locally. I hope to organise these alongside the relevant district councillor.

**The first will be:**

**Saturday 26 September, 10.00am–11.30am**
**Southrepps Village Hall**

**I will also be joined by Cllr Roy Macdonald, the local District Councillor for the Roughton Ward.**

There is no need to make an appointment. Anyone from across the division is very welcome to attend, although I appreciate that people are most likely to come along when a surgery is being held reasonably close to them. That is why I intend to rotate the surgeries around different parts of the division.

I am then hoping to hold another surgery in October and a further in November, with dates and venues to be confirmed.

Parish Councillors are of course very welcome to attend too.

**Norfolk Churches Trust Bike Ride – Saturday 12 September**

The Norfolk Churches Trust annual Bike Ride, Walk & Drive takes place on Saturday 12 September, raising money to help protect and maintain Norfolk's historic churches and chapels.

Participants travel between churches across the county by bike, on foot or by car, collecting sponsorship as they go. The money raised is shared between the participant's nominated church and the Norfolk Churches Trust, helping support the upkeep of these important local buildings.

This year I am taking part in support of Beckham Church and the Norfolk Churches Trust, and I have set myself the challenge of trying to visit every church and chapel in the Erpingham division in a single day. That should mean well over 30 sites and around 70 miles of cycling

The Norfolk Churches Trust has kindly featured the challenge and the background to my involvement in the ride here:

https://norfolkchurchestrust.org.uk/the-norfolk-churches-bike-ride-a-family-tradition/

If anyone would like to sponsor me, donations can be made here:

https://www.justgiving.com/page/callum-ringer-1784834240030

I hope I may see some of you at churches or along the route as I make my way around the division on the day.

**Parish Partnership**

I am pleased to report that Norfolk County Council's Parish Partnership Scheme has survived Reform's cuts and will operate again in 2027/28.

The scheme has funded many useful small-scale highways improvements over the years by matching money raised locally by parish and town councils. I am, however, anticipating fewer applications this year. In previous years, parish councils were often able to meet some or all of their contribution using their County Councillor's Local Member Fund. The new Reform administration has abolished that fund, making it harder for smaller parishes in particular to find the money needed to bring schemes forward.

The Local Member Fund could also previously be used to support measures requiring a Traffic Regulation Order, such as changes to speed limits, parking restrictions or weight restrictions, which are not eligible under Parish Partnership. I have therefore asked the Cabinet Member whether the scheme can now be widened to cover these measures.

Despite that, the Parish Partnership Scheme remains a valuable opportunity and I would strongly encourage any parish considering a highways project to speak to me at the earliest possible opportunity. Local Member support is an essential part of any application, and I am very happy to discuss ideas, help establish whether they are likely to qualify and support councils in developing a bid.

For 2027/28, Norfolk County Council has provisionally allocated £500,000, normally on a 50/50 funding basis, with a maximum County Council contribution of £25,000 per bid.

For very small parish councils with an annual income of less than £2,000, enhanced support is available. The County Council can contribute 75% towards a scheme costing up to £5,000, although this offer can only be used once by any council.

What can be funded?

Potential projects include:

- small lengths of new footway and lower-cost paths or "trods";
- pedestrian crossing improvements;
- improvements to Public Rights of Way and Norfolk Trails;

- walking, wheeling and horse-riding signage and wayfinding;
- mobile speed signs such as SAM2 and SAM3;
- part-time advisory 20mph signs outside schools;
- school “Keep Clear” markings;
- bus shelters; and
- some electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The scheme does have exclusions, including street lighting, highway mirrors, CCTV, parish car parks and drainage cleansing.

Important dates

The final application deadline is 1 December 2026, but councils should not leave it until then.

Norfolk County Council is asking parishes to discuss proposals with their local Highway Engineer ideally by the end of September, so that proposals can be checked for feasibility and proper cost estimates prepared.

Successful bids are expected to be confirmed in March 2027, with parish contributions required by the end of April 2027. Because of the timetable for Local Government Reorganisation, schemes will need to be completed by the end of December 2027.

Applications need to include the purpose and details of the project, an itemised cost estimate, the parish contribution, a map or plan, information about who would benefit and evidence of local support. Support is required from the local County Councillor and Highway Engineer and, where relevant, from affected landowners or frontages.

If your parish is considering applying, please contact me as soon as possible rather than waiting for the December deadline. I would be very happy to discuss possible projects and help establish what might be achievable before councils spend time developing a full application.

**Crisis and resilience support:**

As parish councils will recall, I recently circulated details of support available through Norfolk County Council’s Crisis and Resilience Service for families struggling with back-to-school costs, including school uniform and shoes.

Thank you to those parish councils which shared the information through their local channels. Demand for the school uniform support was very high, which underlined just how many families are feeling the pressure of essential costs.

The support is funded by central government, and I also wanted to remind councils that the Crisis and Resilience Service is much broader than school uniform assistance. It remains available to residents experiencing financial hardship and can help with essential household costs, including heating and heating oil costs, food and other immediate pressures.

I would be grateful if parish councils could continue to keep the service in mind when residents approach them for help and signpost people where appropriate.

More information is available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/CRS, or residents who cannot apply online can call 0344 800 8020.

**Norfolk Trading Standards - action on illicit cigarettes and tobacco**

Norfolk County Council's Trading Standards team continues to take action against the sale of illicit tobacco, cigarettes and vapes. These operations are intelligence-led, so information from residents can play an important part in identifying where enforcement activity may be needed.

Parish councils may therefore wish to make residents aware of how concerns can be reported.

Anyone with information about illegal tobacco, cigarette or vape sales can:

- contact Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133; or
- report concerns anonymously using Norfolk County Council's online form:
  Illegal Vape/Tobacco Sales – Anonymous Reporting
  https://forms.cloud.microsoft/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=7GqcEEZQlUqPPIT2O6GK9EEWIgmT5DNHtoQpuUv8jSRUMVlBMFNSVENGVEQ3TzhRSlJDSkdUVzVEMS4u

Anyone who believes they are being coerced into preparing, distributing or selling illegal tobacco can report this to HMRC online or via the HMRC Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.

Where there are concerns that someone may be a victim of exploitation or modern slavery, the Modern Slavery Helpline on 0800 0121 700 can also provide advice and support.

If parish councils are sharing this information publicly, particularly on social media, please avoid naming specific shops or businesses. Trading Standards investigations are intelligence-led and may involve live enforcement activity.

**Heritage Open Days – 11 to 20 September**

This year's Norfolk Heritage Open Days will take place from 11–20 September, giving residents and visitors the chance to explore historic buildings, sites and cultural venues across the county, including many places which are not normally open to the public.

All events are free, although some have limited capacity and need to be booked in advance. There are also almost 200 drop-in events which do not require booking.

The programme is coordinated and promoted by The Forum Trust and delivered in partnership with venues, community organisations and volunteers across Norfolk. Printed 2026 brochures are available from locations including The Forum, Norfolk libraries and museums.

Parish councils may wish to share details locally, particularly where residents may be interested in heritage, local history or visiting sites that are not usually accessible.

Further information, brochures and online booking are available here:

Everything you need to know – Norfolk Heritage Open Days 2026
https://norfolkheritageopendays.co.uk/news/brochures-booking-and-browsing-for-2026

**Flu Vaccinations**

The NHS is encouraging eligible residents to book their flu vaccination early this year as preparations for winter get underway.

Early vaccination is intended to help protect those most at risk from flu and reduce pressure on local NHS services over the winter months.

The national booking system is now open for eligible adults to pre-book an appointment at a local community pharmacy. Pregnant women and some other eligible groups can receive their vaccination from 1 September, while most eligible adults will be vaccinated from 1 October.

From September, eligible residents should also begin to receive invitations through their GP practice, the NHS App or by letter. However, eligible adults do not need to wait to be contacted before booking.

Residents can check whether they are eligible and book through the NHS flu vaccination webpage:

NHS Flu Vaccine
https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/flu-vaccine/

**Appointee Service consultation *Reminder***

Norfolk County Council is consulting on a proposal to introduce an administrative charge for its Appointee Service. The service supports some adults who are unable to manage their own benefits and do not have a suitable relative or friend able to do so. In these cases, the Council can receive and manage benefit payments on their behalf, pay essential bills and ensure the money is used in their best interests.

The consultation runs until midnight on Monday 12 October 2026. Further information is available at: https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/consultation/7312c5e6

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