



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

July 2026

Bad news for our villages as Reform cuts local highways and community funding

Norfolk's new Reform administration has announced the **end of both the Local Members Fund and the Community Fund**. The decision was taken using the leaders executive power, with no debate or vote whatsoever.

The Local Members Fund has been particularly useful in supporting small-scale highways schemes in our villages, many of which would otherwise have gone overlooked. In recent years, it has helped fund or support SAM2/3 signs, vehicle-activated signage, enhanced road signage, drainage schemes, speed monitoring surveys, feasibility studies for speed limit reductions, footpath and pavement improvements, pedestrian crossings and much more.

These schemes are often brought forward in response to serious local concerns, including accidents and, in some cases, fatalities. I am deeply concerned that this decision will mean far fewer local highways improvements are possible, particularly in villages and on B and C roads, which already too often feel overlooked.

Several villages had schemes that I was keen to support, and this will now be significantly more challenging. Liberal Democrats will be challenging this decision at the next Full Council meeting, in the hope that funding can be returned to councillors and communities who understand local issues best.

Supporting our primary schools

Since my June update, we have received confirmation that Corpusty Primary School will sadly close at the end of term. The community, alongside myself and local MP Steff Aquarone, fought hard for the school to be retained, and I have no doubt that closure will ultimately prove to have been the wrong decision.

Norfolk County Council is now undertaking a consultation as part of a catchment review for the village, and details are attached. If you are affected, please do engage with the consultation and feel free to contact me if you have any concerns.

I have already met with officers to emphasise my concerns about splitting the village between two catchments, and I am hopeful that this particular element will be removed. Given that the reason given for closure at Corpusty was demographic shift and reduced birth rates, I would also like consideration to be given to using this opportunity to support another small school.

Meanwhile, we have received the news that Erpingham Primary School has entered special measures. I have met with council officers to discuss the practical implications of this and am due to meet with the Executive Head before the end of term.

Police and Crime Commissioner by-election

It is difficult to get enthused by the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner by-election. The process is expected to cost around £2 million and will fill a post that is due to be abolished in two years' time.

The Liberal Democrats called for the by-election not to take place, with the functions instead overseen by the existing Police and Crime Panel. In my view, that money would be far better spent on frontline policing.

There are seven candidates contesting the by-election, and I hope you will give your support to Liberal Democrat candidate Chris Brown.

Local Government Reorganisation

The new Reform administration has launched a judicial review against the Local Government Reorganisation process. This is expected to cost a significant amount of money and is widely considered to have little chance of success.

The Government announced its "minded to" position back in March, proposing that three unitary councils replace Norfolk's eight district councils and one county council. This was widely considered the "least worst" option, although many of us remain sceptical about the logic of these changes altogether.

At this stage, I believe we should be working towards the smoothest possible transition to a new council structure, rather than adding further risk and uncertainty. I will keep you updated as things develop.

Children's Services SEND support plan

Norfolk has published a three-year plan to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Norfolk Local SEND Reform Plan has been developed following extensive engagement with children and young people, families, schools, early years settings, colleges, the NHS and the voluntary sector.

The plan responds to a Government request for all areas to submit a Local SEND Reform Plan by 19 June. It focuses on support that can be introduced now, ahead of national legislation which will bring further change, and builds on work already under way through the council's multi-million-pound Local First Inclusion programme to transform SEND education.

If approved by Government, the plan could see 90%, around £195 million, of the council's historic Dedicated Schools Grant SEND deficit repaid.

Further details are available in the council's press release, and a link to the full plan is also available.

Stalham Extra Care Scheme reaches topping-out milestone

A topping-out ceremony has marked a key milestone in the delivery of 61 Extra Care homes for over-55s in Stalham, to be known as Albion Gardens.

The scheme, delivered by Housing 21 with Norfolk County Council and North Norfolk District Council, will provide modern one- and two-bedroom apartments with 24/7 on-site care, supporting independent living.

The development will include communal facilities and is due to open in spring 2027, helping meet growing demand for flexible adult social care housing in the local community.

Parish Council meetings

As previously mentioned, with 27 parish councils and many diary clashes, I will not always be able to attend every parish council meeting. However, I am very happy to meet councillors and clerks outside the usual meeting schedule, and I have already been pleased to do this with a number of parishes.

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