

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

October 2026

It has been an interesting few weeks at County Hall it seems, questions about the appointment of the new chief executive continue to be asked and each time some more information comes out it raises more and more concerns. It was pointed out that the interview process for refuse collectors is more rigorous!

As a member of the Infrastructure and Development select committee we had the chance to scrutinise Anglian Water at our September meeting. We heard about investment plans, but heard many concerns about the number of leaks this summer and the length of time it has taken to repair them. I asked that the additional repairs costs come from shareholders before ratepayers though I don't have a great deal of confidence that will be the case.

I also had the chance to raise issues with phone signal and broadband and with officers are now making progress with providers though I do expect this to be slow, it does need as many people as possible making as much noise to get them to listen. Where there are specific parish level updates on this I will share those with the communities. Thanks to all those who have contacted me about this.

There are also some concerning highways matters. The new Reform administration is looking to cut 5% of gritting routes and we do not know which they will be looking to cut yet. I will be making the case that none of our roads should be removed from the priority routes of course. In addition, vehicle activated signs and school 'wig wags' will now no longer be automatically replaced once they come to the end of their operational life but will instead only be replaced where there is an evidence accident need. Of course, these signs were always put up where there was a need and of course if there are now longer so many accidents it could just be because they are working!

Holway Road Roundabout

All of the local District and County Councillors for the area, together with Steff Aquarone MP, have now written to Norfolk County Council to press the case for the proposed A148/Holway Road roundabout.

The junction has long been a source of concern, both in terms of safety and the difficulty of accessing the A148. We have also stressed that any improvements here should form part of the wider work needed to improve safety along the A148.

We have asked the County Council to look again at how the scheme could be funded and progressed, including whether funding currently allocated elsewhere could be redirected towards this long-standing priority.

We will continue to make the case for the Holway Road roundabout and for wider safety improvements along the A148.

Councillor Surgeries

I am looking to continue the rollout of regular councillor surgeries around the Erpingham division, moving them between different villages so that residents have opportunities to come and speak to me locally. Where possible, I hope to continue holding these alongside the relevant district councillor.

The first surgery, held at Southrepps Village Hall on 26 September with Cllr Roy Macdonald, was a real success. We needed the full 90 minutes to speak to everyone who came along, with residents raising a wide range of issues including highways, the environment, planning, digital connectivity and education.

I am now looking to arrange further surgeries before the end of the year. Dates are still to be confirmed, but I am hoping to hold one in the Roughton area with Cllr Roy Macdonald, and another in Corpusty & Saxthorpe with Cllr Andrew Brown.

As before, there will be no need to make an appointment and residents from across the division will be welcome to attend. Parish Councillors are also very welcome to come along.

Norfolk Churches Trust & Sponsored Cycle Ride

In September I took part in the Norfolk Churches Trust annual Bike Ride, Walk & Drive, raising money to help protect and maintain Norfolk's historic churches and chapels.

I had set myself the challenge of visiting every church and chapel in the Erpingham division in a single day. In the end, I managed 47 churches and around 60 miles of cycling. (Not quite every church in the division but only 4 short!)

We have so far raised nearly £500 for Beckham Church and the Norfolk Churches Trust. A huge thank you to everyone who has supported, sponsored or encouraged me along the way.

The following week, I joined Steff Aquarone MP and representatives from the Norfolk Churches Trust to discuss some of the wider challenges facing our rural churches. North Norfolk has a particularly high concentration of historic medieval churches, many of which require significant and ongoing work simply to keep them in good repair.

One particular concern is the loss of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, which had helped churches recover the VAT cost of eligible repairs. The consequence is that communities trying to preserve some of our most important listed buildings can now face having to raise an additional 20% towards repair work simply to cover VAT.

It creates a rather perverse situation: a new church can be built without VAT being charged, while repairing one of our listed medieval treasures can attract an additional 20% cost. That does not seem right, particularly when so much of the burden of maintaining these nationally important buildings falls on small congregations and local communities.

Thank you again to everyone who supported the bike ride and to all those across the division who help look after our historic churches throughout the year.

Parish Partnership

A reminder that Norfolk County Council's Parish Partnership Scheme will operate again in 2027/28, with £500,000 provisionally available for locally supported highways projects.

The scheme normally provides funding on a 50/50 basis, with a maximum County Council contribution of £25,000 per bid. Enhanced support is available for very small parish councils with an annual income below £2,000.

Potential projects include small lengths of footway or trods, pedestrian crossing improvements, Public Rights of Way works, speed signs such as SAM2 and SAM3, school safety measures, bus shelters and some electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The final deadline for applications is 1 December 2026, but I would strongly encourage any parish considering a bid to get in touch with me as soon as possible. Applications require support from the local County Councillor and Highway Engineer, and early discussion is important so that feasibility and costs can be properly worked through before a bid is submitted.

With the abolition of the Local Member Fund, some smaller parishes may find it more difficult to provide their share of the funding this year. I have also raised the question of whether Parish Partnership could be widened to cover measures such as Traffic Regulation Orders, which previously could sometimes be supported through the Local Member Fund.

If your parish has an idea for a highways project, please do contact me. I am very happy to discuss whether it may be eligible and help with the early stages of developing an 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.

SCAM AWARE – Fraudulent council tax letters

Norfolk County Council Trading Standards has issued a warning about a scam letter currently being circulated which falsely claims to be from Norfolk County Council.

The letter says that it is informing residents about changes to Council Tax payments. This is a scam. Norfolk County Council does not collect Council Tax in Norfolk; this is the responsibility of the relevant district council.

The letter also contains a QR code which directs people to a fraudulent website and attempts to obtain payment.

Trading Standards is investigating. Residents are advised to ignore any such letter and not to scan the QR code or make any payment.

Please could parish councils help by sharing this warning locally, particularly with residents who may be more vulnerable to scams.

Suspected scam letters can be reported to Trading Standards through the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133.

Any genuine queries about Council Tax should be raised directly with the relevant district council.

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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