

Norfolk County Council updates 26-06-25

Cabinet backs one council for Norfolk

Councillors have backed a report which says replacing Norfolk's eight councils with one would save £36.2m per year and deliver the biggest benefits to residents.

On 23 June Norfolk County Council's cabinet selected a single unitary council as its preferred option, which will be developed into a detailed proposal and submitted to the Government in September.

Norfolk County Council studied data and evidence on the pros and cons of one, two or three unitary councils and asked the public what mattered to them about local councils and services. It is proposing that its preferred option is one unitary council, covering the whole area.

Having one council would cut costs, join up services for residents and ensure strong financial foundations, according to the draft options appraisal report considered by the cabinet.

The county council's report says that the key benefits of one council for Norfolk are:

- A single council would mean consistent services, delivered across the whole of Norfolk, with equal levels of Council Tax, service quality and services available, wherever you live
- It would save £36.2m per year, by cutting duplication, reducing the number of chief officers and councillors and having economies of scale when purchasing services. Start-up costs would be repaid in a year
- It avoids the risks and costs of splitting up complex, county-wide services like adult social services, children's services and highways - which would incur extra costs of between £20.4m and £33.6m per year, if there were two or three unitary councils
- It recognises the role of greater Norwich as an economic centre of activity for the whole county and highlights the importance of not creating an artificial boundary around it, which would stifle growth

The report's conclusion says: "We have an opportunity to create a new council for Norfolk which can:

- Be a powerful advocate for Norfolk - speaking up and influencing as one voice for local communities, creating more impact, both with any Norfolk/Suffolk mayor and with the Government, businesses and investors
- Be accountable - our residents would know that one council was responsible for all of the services, removing confusion. There would be one set of locally elected councillors, with one set of elections
- Be efficient - removing duplication and bureaucracy and joining up services to deliver better value for money
- Enable devolution - through a single, clear and concise set of strategic priorities for Norfolk and simplifying decision-making
- Avoid the use of untested models for delivering critical services to children, families, older people and some of the most vulnerable of our residents"

Now that a preferred option has been selected, there will be further engagement. The preferred option will be developed into a detailed proposal, to be submitted to the Government by 26 September 2025. Ministers will take the final decision on what council structure to adopt.

Further details are available on the county council's webpages [here](#).

National Updates

Industrial Strategy launched

The Government has launched its long-awaited [Industrial Strategy](#), which aims to make its mission for economic growth a reality. The strategy, covering eight core sectors that they see as having the greatest growth potential over the coming decade, sets out plans to drive investment, support innovation, and retain the UK's competitiveness.

Alongside the Industrial Strategy, the Government has also published separate [sector plans](#), developed with industry, to set out a vision of the sector's transformation by 2035.

The 8 core sectors are: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Creative Industries, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Financial Services, Life Sciences, and Professional and Business Services.

Progress will be tracked through a series of economic indicators, such as investment levels, productivity, job creation, and exports, with oversight to come from a permanent Industrial Strategy Council, supported by an advisory body.

The Government has committed in the strategy to supporting local authorities (and Mayors) by working together on the delivery of 10-year Local Growth Plans.

The Local Government Association, in response to the publication of the strategy, says that any ambition for national economic growth is only achievable if local economies are working well, and that sufficient funding must be provided so that all councils can deliver local growth priorities to realise the full potential of Growth Plans, Industrial Strategy Zones and other ambitions identified in the strategy.

Fair Funding Review 2.0 Consultation

The Government has announced a [consultation on the redistribution of local authority funding](#).

The consultation seeks views on the approach to local authority funding reform through the Local Government Finance Settlement from 2026 to 2027.

The scope of the consultation includes determining local authority funding allocations; the approach to consolidating funding; measuring differences in demand for services and the cost of delivering them; measuring differences in locally available resources; the New Homes Bonus; and transitional arrangements and keeping allocations up to date.

It also covers a long-term approach to the business rates retention system; devolution and wider reform and invites views on the possible equalities impacts of these proposals.

Once finalised, the changes will be implemented in 2026-27 through the first multi-year Settlement in a decade.

In a [statement made on 20 June](#), Local government minister Jim McMahon said: "We will work with councils to fix what is broken, moving around £2 billion of funding to the places and communities that need it most; and modernising council tax administration. He also said that the formulae used to assess local authorities' current needs is out of date and will be updated to target money where it needs to go and ensure those places that have been overlooked get their fair share.

The consultation runs until 15 August 2025.

Modernising Council Tax Administration consultation

Along with their [Fair Funding Consultation](#), the Government [launched a new consultation](#) seeking views on policies to improve the administration of council tax to create a fairer and more efficient system for taxpayers and local authorities.

This consultation contains policy proposals to improve the system, including changing the ways council tax is billed, collected and enforced; modernising the support available in the system; and, supporting councils to improve efficiency.

The consultation runs until 12 September 2025.

Care leavers and abuse survivors to get greater access to social housing

Young people leaving care and domestic abuse survivors will now have better access to social housing as [the government removes a local connection requirement](#) for these groups. New changes, which come into force next month, will exempt them from rules that restrict access to social housing for those that do not have a connection to the local area.

This change applies to all councils in England, nearly 90% of which currently use local connection criteria to determine who qualifies for social housing. It follows reforms last year to remove barriers for all former UK Armed Forces Veterans.

New Water (Special Measures) Act measures come into force

Water companies will now have to publish plans to reduce pollution incidents and address the use of nature-based solutions when managing wastewater.

From 23 June Water companies must be transparent in their efforts to prevent pollution as a new legal requirement in the Water (Special Measures) Act comes into force (Section 3).

[The new rules](#) make it mandatory for water companies to prepare and publish Pollution Incident Reduction Plans (PIRPs).

These outline how companies will identify, respond to and reduce sources of sewage pollution incidents in their network each year. This includes actions like increasing monitoring, investing in technology and infrastructure and carrying out awareness campaigns for customers.

Water companies will need to publish these plans by 1 April each year, and report on the progress made since their previous plan. The first plans will be published by 1 April 2026 and scrutinised by the Environment Agency.