

Norfolk County Council Updates – 09-10-25

Devolution programme update

New powers and funding to boost jobs, transport and growth could be coming to Norfolk and Suffolk, if councillors vote in favour on 16 October.

Under the Government's devolution priority programme, Norfolk and Suffolk have been offered the transfer of powers and funding from Whitehall, to enable decisions on jobs, skills, transport and housing to be taken in Norfolk and Suffolk, including a

a multi-million pound investment fund, for 30 years, to spend on local priorities.

Devolution can only proceed with the support of both councils. Suffolk County Council's cabinet supported the proposals on 2 October.

The report will be scrutinised by Norfolk County Council's Strategic and Corporate Select Committee on 10 October, ahead of a full council discussion and the cabinet decision on 16 October. The report is available [here](#).

Further information is available in our press release [here](#).

Transforming services and addressing financial pressures

Norfolk County Council is continuing to transform local services while navigating significant financial pressures.

Driven by rising demand and inflation, the council has a budget gap of £41.6m in 2026/27 - rising to £171.4m over the next four years.

To help address the financial gap, the Council has developed proposals to save £35.7m - with major savings expected through investment in key demand-led services such as adult social care and home-to-school transport.

Over the coming months, the budget will be subject to public consultation and scrutiny by the council's select committees. Key national announcements - including the Autumn Budget on 26 November and the Local Government Finance Settlement in December - will inform final proposals.

Cabinet will consider the finance reports when it meets on 13 October. The cabinet report is available [here](#).

Cabinet will then review updated proposals on 26 January 2026, with Full Council making final decisions, including on council tax, on 17 February 2026.

Falling pupil numbers

The education landscape in Norfolk is set to change as the county tackles the national drop in pupil numbers. The number of children in the education system in the county is expected to fall from a peak of nearly 10,000 in the current year 9, to fewer than 7,000 in the 2027 reception intake.

In a report on the Education Policy and Strategic Programme, members will hear how the council is looking to refresh its policy framework, in light of changes to legislation and the changing demographics.

Cabinet will consider the emerging pressures on Norfolk's schools caused by lower pupil numbers and the associated reduction in budget when it meets on 13 October.

Further information and a link to the papers is available in our press release [here](#).

Hethel road scheme

A new road scheme at Hethel is set to unlock employment and investment opportunities in Norfolk's advanced engineering and manufacturing sector.

A new roundabout and link road will provide the essential infrastructure needed to support the future growth of the site.

Hethel Engineering Centre (HEC) is expanding to enable more start-ups to move into the area and collaborate, while a further 20 hectares of nearby land has been allocated in the Local Development Plan for advanced engineering and technology-based businesses.

Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council have been working closely with Lotus Cars, Hethel Innovation and other landowners to develop the access improvements. Funding is being provided by the Greater Norwich Growth Board through the Infrastructure Investment Fund, Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council, with the work overseen by Hainstone.

#NorfolkWinter Campaign and name our gritters competition

The #NorfolkWinter Communications Campaign has run for many years and gets high levels of engagement across Norfolk. This year we are introducing Gritter characters and creating more video content - both in the lead up to winter and throughout the season. The campaign will communicate important safety messages and help residents to gain a better understanding of the preparations and work involved in delivering the service.

A key highlight of this year's campaign is the re-launch of the popular 'Name Our Gritters' competition – offering residents the chance to name all of the vehicles in our winter fleet. All infant and junior schools in Norfolk are invited to participate, with classroom activities designed to make the process engaging and educational for children. Additionally, we've teamed up with BBC Radio Norfolk and the Eastern Daily Press (EDP) who will each run public competitions for their audiences.

Key details:

- 48 gritters will be named by primary schools across Norfolk.
- 5 gritters will be named by Radio Norfolk listeners (voting via the BBC website).
- 5 gritters will be named by EDP readers (voting via the EDP website).

The final date for submissions is Friday 24 October

Winning schools will be notified, and all winners for the Radio Norfolk and EDP-named gritters will be announced. Vehicles will have winning names printed on them ahead of the first gritting run of the season. Additionally, winning schools will be offered a visit from a gritter at the end of winter - a great opportunity for pupils to meet the team and see the vehicle up close.

How members can support the #NorfolkWinter campaign

Encourage schools that you come into contact with to take part in our competition.

- Share campaign content which will be posted on Norfolk County Council channels onto your own social media pages or local pages that you follow. Just look out for the hashtag - #NorfolkWinter
- Encourage residents to follow Norfolk County Council on Facebook to get the most up to date information (we will post every day that our gritters are out on the roads throughout the winter season)

National Updates

Museums Funding

The Government has [announced](#) a £20m investment in civic museums – **including £360,000 for the Norfolk Museums Service** – to improve public access to collections, protect community and educational programmes, and help to ensure local and regional museums are fit for the future.

The Museum Renewal Fund is part of the £270m Arts Everywhere Fund, [set out](#) by the Culture Secretary in February 2025

Homebuying proposals and consultation

The Government is [proposing](#) an overhaul of the homebuying process, aiming to save first-time buyers around £710 on average and cut purchase times by about four weeks.

A new [consultation](#) proposes that sellers and estate agents must provide more comprehensive property information upfront to prevent last-minute surprises, and explores binding lock-in agreements to reduce sales collapsing. Views are welcomed from anyone who has an interest in home buying and selling, especially property professionals involved in home buying and selling and members of the public who have experienced the process as either a buyer or seller.

The consultation closes on 29 December 2025.

Licenses for shops selling tobacco and vapes

The Government has announced plans to introduce licenses for retailers selling tobacco, vapes and nicotine products, as part of a crackdown on rogue traders and to protect children from addiction.

It is part of a [call for evidence that will help shape regulations as part of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill](#), which aims to create a smoke-free generation and protect children and young people from a lifetime of addiction.

The Local Government Association said that councils have long supported the introduction of a comprehensive licensing regime for all tobacco and nicotine products, including vapes, and that a well-designed licensing system would give councils the tools they need to better regulate sales, protect young people, and support enforcement.