

Barry Stone – County Councillor for the Clavering Division

Parish Report – January 2025



Norfolk County Council begins path to new powers and funding through devolution from Government.

Norfolk Conservative County councillors have backed a bid to secure new powers and funding to benefit Norfolk.

The full county council discussed and then the cabinet agreed to apply to be part of the Government's priority programme for devolution.

The Government wants to extend devolution of powers and funding, plus local government reform, across England. It invited councils to express an interest in being part of the first phase, by January 10th.

Ministers want to see a devolution deal covering Norfolk and Suffolk, with an elected mayor. They also want "two tier" areas like Norfolk - where responsibility for key services is split between county and district councils - to replace existing councils with unitary authorities.

If Norfolk joins the priority programme, proposals would be developed for a mayoral combined authority, covering Norfolk and Suffolk. This would include powers and funding for strategic planning, housing, transport and skills. Elections for a Norfolk and Suffolk mayor could then take place in May 2026.

For more information please see the [English Devolution White Paper](#).

To watch the Full Council meeting please following this [link](#)

Norfolk set to receive highest highways maintenance allocation in the region

Norfolk is set to receive more than £56 million for highways maintenance this year.

Funding for every local authority across England today can be used throughout 2025/6 on the roads are in most need of repair, and to deliver immediate fixes for communities across Norfolk.

This comes just a few weeks after Norfolk took the top spot for the second year in a row in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) survey on roads and transport. People from across the county gave Norfolk the highest (above average) score in satisfaction with the condition of the highways.

More than 5,300 potholes have been fixed across Norfolk since April this year and of those 99% were repaired by our contractors within the agreed response times. If you see a pothole - don't assume someone else has reported it. Let us know by completing our online form: www.norfolk.gov.uk/potholes

Investment and enhancements lead to increased passenger satisfaction on Norfolk's buses

A recent independent survey through Transport Focus found that overall bus passenger satisfaction in Norfolk has increased by 6% with 87% of passengers satisfied with their journey. That puts Norfolk above the England average of 83%. Norfolk improved in all areas of satisfaction with the biggest improvements being in punctuality and value for money.

Transport Focus is an independent consumer organisation representing the interests of bus passengers across England outside of London. The surveys measure actual passenger experience and provide robust metrics for measuring bus service targets.

Meanwhile the number of people choosing to use the bus continues to grow with almost 7m passenger journeys for the second quarter of the year (May, June, July). That's a 12% increase compared to the same quarter last year.

The improvements are now set to continue with Norfolk County Council being awarded another £15.9m from Government last month to spend in 2025/26. The funding is a mix of capital and revenue and the council is now working with the Enhanced Partnership and stakeholders to decide where the money should be spent.

Norfolk County Council uses bin lorries to map mobile coverage in Norfolk.

Norfolk County Council has launched a new online tool that will help residents to check mobile signal in their area, using data collected from Norfolk's bin lorries.

Last year the council partnered with mobile analysts Streetwave to install monitoring devices on waste collection vehicles across all seven districts in Norfolk.

You can check mobile coverage in your area using the service. [Enter your post code into the online checker](#), or [browse the coverage map](#), which you can filter by network.

These devices measure the quality of mobile networks across the county, collecting data on signal strength and download speeds.

The data covers the four main Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) who are the companies that own and operate the physical infrastructure required for mobile communication services. In the UK they are EE, O2, Three, and Vodafone. Other providers will use one of the MNO networks, for example giffgaff use O2's network, while iD Mobile is based on Three's network. [Check which network your provider uses](#).

The survey devices checked outdoor coverage, with the data from waste collection vehicles supplemented by one fire service vehicle and a backpack-based device used for ad-hoc surveys.

Real-world indoor coverage can be affected by a range of factors, including the construction of a property.

While the data covers many areas of Norfolk it isn't definitive and should be used as an additional tool alongside other sources of information. This information will continue to be updated over time to help everyone make the right choices with the best possible information available.

The results from this coverage checker are taken using mobile handsets that have been physically performing speed and signal strength tests. This differs from the coverage checkers provided by Ofcom or the mobile network operators which are often estimates with limited real-world measurements.

Rollout of new fleet of fire and rescue vehicles to continue into 2025

Four additional tactical response vehicles have rolled into Norfolk as the latest additions as part of a multi-million pound investment by Norfolk County Council to modernise the fire and rescue fleet.

The four Toyota Hilux 4x4s enable firefighters to quickly attend isolated locations and deal with emergencies in spate weather conditions.

At a cost of £175,000, the new fully equipped TRV vehicles, complete with misting units, will be located at Reepham, Acle, Downham Market and North Walsham early in the New Year. They will join the fleet of TRVs already in service at Cromer, Sandringham, Wymondham, Diss and Gorleston, plus a Land Rover at Thetford.

The investment in TRVS is the latest move to provide specialist equipment for Norfolk and comes in addition to the recent £7 million investment of 22 new fire appliances for Norfolk, which replace an ageing fleet that had come of the end of its working life.

Hitting the road over the last 18 months, the new type B Angloco vehicles are now on fire stations at Carrow, Earlham, Sprowston, Dereham, Kings Lynn, Thetford, Great Yarmouth, Hethersett, Attleborough, Wymondham, Diss, Stalham, Aylsham, North Walsham, Holt, Cromer, Fakenham, Downham Market, Watton and Long Stratton. Two others are also in service assisting with training and duty cover. This month, the completion of the project means the final ones have now gone to their home stations.

New wildfire personal protective equipment was recently introduced to enable firefighters the right protection but in a more lightweight form when dealing with intense fires in the hot summer.

Further investment in fleet and equipment, to ensure crews have the best possible resources for all the types of emergencies they face, will be coming into service within the next two years. This includes plans for updated vans for the service's nine hydrant and area technicians, to enable them to have reliable vehicles which contain all they need when out on site.

As always, I am here to help in any way I can and will always respond to email and telephone requests for assistance.

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Kind regards

Barry