

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT – OCTOBER 2026

Margaret Thomas County Councillor for West Depwade

Highways continue to be a key issue for local residents. Norfolk County Council is trialling a new repair system called Roadmender, which treats cracks and road defects before they develop into potholes. The aim is to provide quicker, more durable repairs, minimise disruption and make better use of taxpayers' money.

The County Council has also published its initial [budget proposals for 2027/28](#). Rising demand for adult social care and children's services continues to place pressure on finances, and the Council is consulting on a range of proposals aimed at protecting frontline services while closing a projected funding gap.

Key proposals include:

- Earlier intervention and neighbourhood support to reduce demand for adult social care
- More support for children to remain within or return to family networks, alongside expanded family help services
- Higher income from infrastructure fees and charges

Adult social care remains an important priority. The national [Big Conversation on Care](#) is seeking views from residents to help shape future care provision. This complements Norfolk's ongoing work to support people to live independently and remain connected to their local communities for longer. [\[caseycommi...sion.co.uk\]](#), [The Big Conversation on Care | The Casey Commission](#)

Public health initiatives are also expanding across the county. New self-service health check stations have been introduced, allowing residents to access free health assessments, including blood pressure, heart rate and lifestyle indicators, together with personalised advice and signposting to support services.

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service recorded its busiest month ever in August, attending 1,295 incidents following an exceptionally hot and dry summer. The increase was largely driven by fires across the county, including incidents in Kenninghall and other rural locations.

Young people across Norfolk have benefited from a range of summer activities organised by the County Council's youth support team. Nearly 1,700 young people took part in programmes designed to build confidence, improve wellbeing and provide positive opportunities, particularly for those at risk of isolation or exploitation.

There are also several [funding opportunities](#) available for community organisations. Grants are currently being offered to support community facilities, local projects and renewable energy initiatives. Parish councils and local groups may wish to explore whether these opportunities could benefit their communities.

Finally, the County Council has adopted its new "[Standing Up for Norfolk](#)" priorities, focusing on supporting vulnerable residents, improving roads and transport, strengthening communities, encouraging economic growth and ensuring value for money. These priorities will help shape the Council's work over the coming years.

Local Issues and Community Representation

Alongside these county-wide developments, I have continued to represent residents and communities across West Depwade on a range of local issues, including major planning applications, road safety, rural infrastructure and adult social care transformation.

- I recently attended the Planning Inspectorate examination hearings for the proposed East Pye Solar Farm and spoke on behalf of local residents. I raised concerns about the difficulties many people have faced engaging with the process and the confusion and stress this has caused. During the issue-specific hearings, I highlighted the lack of assessment of the cumulative impact that multiple large-scale energy developments could have on residents' mental health and wellbeing, as well as their potential impact on local services. I am pleased that the Planning Inspectorate agreed that this issue should be scoped back into the examination. I will continue to make representations throughout the process, liaise with the Block East Pye Solar campaign group and remain firmly opposed to this application.
- I also recently raised concerns at the County Council's Planning and Infrastructure Select Committee regarding Anglian Water's compensation process for affected farmers. I highlighted the complexity of the arrangements and the additional stress and uncertainty this can create, particularly for tenant farmers, and called for a simpler and more transparent approach.
- As Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, I continue to play an active role in helping to drive the transformation programme currently taking place across Norfolk. This work is focused on improving outcomes for residents, supporting greater independence, delivering services closer to communities where possible, and ensuring best value for money across the adult social care sector.
- I continue to liaise with highways officers on speed reduction measures and wider road safety concerns across the division.
- I am also working with digital services to support improvements in both digital connectivity and digital skills across Norfolk, helping to ensure rural communities are not left behind.
- In addition, I continue to make representations on behalf of residents regarding planning applications where there are significant local concerns, ensuring community views are fully considered throughout the planning process.

Please contact me if you wish me to raise any concerns or issues on your behalf.

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