

One council for Norfolk plan submitted to Government

The Government is being urged to back plans for better services, local decision making and bigger savings, by replacing Norfolk's eight councils with one.

Norfolk County Council's cabinet has agreed to submit a business case which details how a single council for Norfolk would **save £39.8 million per year** and deliver the biggest benefits. The decision came after the case was discussed by full council on 25th September.

The Government wants to have fewer councils, known as unitary authorities, which run all services in their area. It has asked existing councils to submit detailed proposals by 26th September.

The county council's business case highlights a range of key benefits of having one council, including:

- **Saving £39.8 million per year**, compared to the current eight councils - money that can be invested in improving services
- Removing duplication and joining up services that are currently divided between councils, such as adult social services and housing
- A focus on **meeting local needs**, by setting priorities at neighbourhood area committees, closer working with town and parish councils and voluntary groups and delivering services through integrated neighbourhood teams
- Avoiding the risk of splitting up crucial, county-wide services such as adult social care, children's services and highways
- Being in a strong position to boost Norfolk's economy, by having a plan for the whole county

A New Relationship with Town and Parish Councils

The move to a single unitary council is about empowering, not centralising. Town and parish councils, over 550 across Norfolk, serving 70% of the population, are seen as essential to strong local leadership and democracy.

What's on Offer for Parishes

- **More Local Influence:** Parishes will have a **greater say in decisions**, with the option to take on more powers if they choose.
- **Collaborative Working:** Support for parishes to work in clusters, sharing ideas, managing services, and strengthening their collective voice while keeping local identity.

- **Community Assets & Services:** Clear, consistent options to take on local assets (like parks, halls, toilets) and services (e.g. grass cutting, minor road repairs, community transport), if they wish with associated funding.
- **Support & Safeguards:** Any transfers will be voluntary and well-supported, with training, templates, governance advice, and a focus on financial sustainability.
- **Funding & Budgets:** **More influence** over local spending, including devolved budgets, parish highways schemes, councillor funding, and access to grants and developer contributions.
- **Shared Principles:** The approach is rooted in co-design, flexibility, transparency, strong communication, and long-term sustainability.
- **Clustering Support:** **Help for parishes** to group together to manage services or assets, and share learning.
- **Unparished Areas:** In places like Norwich, Great Yarmouth, and King's Lynn, new Neighbourhood Area Committees will ensure local voices remain empowered
- **Preservation of valued historic civic functions** like mayors and aldermen.

Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs)

Purpose:

NACs are local, democratic decision-making bodies that shape services, allocate budgets, and drive community-led change. They are not advisory panels, but empowered, place-based governance structures.

Geography:

Each NAC will cover 30,000–50,000 residents, with boundaries co-designed with communities to reflect local identity.

Membership:

Tailored to each area, typically including:

- Local councillors (for accountability)
- Statutory services (e.g. health, police, social care)
- Town and parish councils
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Residents' groups, businesses, schools, and other local leaders

Key Functions:

- Set priorities based on local insight
- Align council and partner activity
- Allocate devolved budgets
- Act as a democratic link between residents and the council
- Support collaboration among parishes

How They Work:

NACs will be inclusive, accessible, and action-driven, supported by officers and infrastructure. Meetings will be held locally, in plain language, with various ways for residents to engage.

Building on Existing Strengths:

NACs will build on successful models like Town Deal Boards, Health & Wellbeing Partnerships, and Youth Advisory Boards. Existing Neighbourhood Boards (e.g. Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Norwich) will be integrated into the new framework.

The Government is due to consult the public on different council options this autumn, before making a final decision, expected in spring next year.

You can find out more at www.norfolk.gov.uk/onecouncil

Start the new school year with the Safe School Run Pledge

As the new academic year kicks off, Norfolk County Council's Public Health Road Safety team is inviting schools, parents, and carers across the county to take part in the **Safe School Run pledge**, an initiative promoting safer, healthier, and more sustainable travel during school drop-off and pick-up times.

Last year, nearly sixty schools joined the pledge, making a real difference. Participating schools reported a **10% increase** in walking, scooting, or cycling, fewer cars at busy times, and greater road safety awareness among children and their families.

This year, schools will receive **updated resources** to support safe parking, reduce engine idling, and improve air quality around school entrances. These free materials, created by Norfolk County Council's Public Health Road Safety team with input from Norfolk Constabulary and Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, are designed to help schools engage their communities in making streets safer and cleaner for everyone.

The pledge encourages simple but effective actions such as parking a short distance away and walking the last stretch, switching off engines while waiting, and choosing active travel options like walking, wheeling, or cycling whenever possible.

Schools interested in joining the pledge or accessing the free resources can visit the [Norfolk County Council's website](#) or contact the Road Safety team for support.

Norfolk County Council Invites Communities to Grow Greener with Discounted Tree Packs

Tree planting in Norfolk is set for another boost this season as Norfolk County Council continues its drive towards 1 million trees for the county.

The council's subsidised tree scheme is also open again, offering individuals, parish councils, community groups, businesses, schools and landowners the chance to apply for tree packs and protection materials at up to **50% off the original price**.

For those who want to do their bit to boost the number of trees in Norfolk but don't have space for woodland, subsidised tree packs are available to order now.

For the first time this year, a limited number of 'Taller Tree Packs', grown at Gressenhall Community Tree Nursery, are also available. These include larger beech, oak, and birch trees, making it possible for more people to take part and be 1 in a million.

For more information on Norfolk's One Million Trees initiative visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/milliontrees.

Strong progress in transforming SEND education in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council is making significant strides in improving education for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), according to a recent report.

New teams and initiatives are enhancing support for inclusion within mainstream schools, while hundreds of additional places in specialist resource bases (SRBs) are enabling more children to remain in their local mainstream schools with tailored support.

The report, presented to the council's cross-party Children, Families and Communities Select Committee, highlights the council's substantial progress despite national delays in SEND reform and ongoing funding challenges.

Thanks to Norfolk's Safety Valve agreement, the council has secured over £130 million in joint investment with the Department for Education. Despite managing a cumulative Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of £131.9 million, Norfolk has committed more than £15

million in additional funding to bolster SEND services and continues to collaborate with the DfE to secure further funding aimed at reducing the deficit.

Councils launch package to support staff at Lotus Cars

The taskforce set up by Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk Council has launched a comprehensive support package designed to help employees and their families impacted by the recent announcement of redundancies at Lotus Cars.

The package that will be offered to Lotus employees and those affected in its supply chain, provides a holistic range of services designed around three key pillars of support, hardship and financial stability, employment and skills, and business start-ups.

The taskforce will use the time between now and the end of the financial year, when the redundancies are expected, to work with Lotus and its staff and help them navigate their next steps. The comprehensive support package, detailed below, offers practical assistance focused on three key areas: hardship and managing finances, finding a new job and business start-up.