

# George Boyd: County Councillor's Report

## Waveney Valley Division

### June 2026



#### **Introduction**

This is my first monthly report as your new County Councillor. I am extremely honoured that the residents of Waveney Valley have placed their trust in me, and I am ready to serve them with all my energy and effort. Over the last few weeks since the election I have attended multiple Parish Council meetings, and I will continue to do so throughout my tenure. In addition, I have been contacted by individual residents about a wide variety of local concerns which they believe have been ignored for too long, particularly around poor-quality infrastructure and speeding issues, many pertaining to the A143. However, I suspect that despite the many conversations with residents I have already had there will still be issues that I need to be made aware of and should be brought to my attention. As such, I implore anyone who has not already contacted me, but has an issue which needs addressing, to please get in contact via the contact details at the bottom of this report.

#### **Local Election Results 2026**

These elections were long overdue. Originally scheduled for May 2025, they were delayed by one year in 9 areas across the UK on the pretence that planning for Local Government Re-Organisation and holding elections presented too much of a logistical challenge. However, after the initial one-year postponement the Government yet again considered pushing elections back again. Only after Reform UK launched a legal challenge did the Government U-turn and allow the elections to proceed as they should this year. Elections should always take place regardless of the political initiatives of the Government of the day.

Thank you to all those who voted on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May. Turnout was higher than usual in most divisions throughout our county, and it was particularly pleasing to see so many young people and those who have not previously participated engage and inform themselves about with the major issues facing Norfolk. I hope this is a sign of things to come. A democracy cannot function without the people.

The election produced a major change in the council's political balance. Reform UK emerged as the largest party, while the previously dominant Conservatives experienced substantial losses. No single party won an outright majority, so the council moves to No Overall Control. However, Reform UK is by far the largest party and has formed an administration, which will work with councillors from other parties to pass legislation where necessary. There are no plans for coalitions at this point.

The political make-up of the new council is as follows:

- Reform UK: 40
- Liberal Democrats: 13
- Green: 12
- Great Yarmouth First: 9

- Conservatives: 8
- Labour: 1
- Independent: 1

### **Annual General Meeting / Full Meeting of the Council**

The AGM and first full meeting of the Council was held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May at County Hall. A cabinet has also been appointed by the elected Leader:

- David Bick (Thetford West), Leader, Budget Responsibility
- Robin Hunter-Clarke (Dereham South), Deputy Leader, Strategy & Local Government Reorganisation
- Justine Thomas (Acle), Chief Whip & Budget Responsibility
- Scott Hussey (The Brecks), Adult Social Care & Public Health
- Wendy Atkinson (Woodside), Children, Families & SEND
- Kabeer Kher (Yare & Necton), Business, Skills & Agriculture
- Tom Dickerson (Launditch), Highways & Transport
- Nick Taylor (Hellesdon), Commercial Assets & Revenue Generation
- Pat Gould (Downham Market), Countryside, Coast & Culture
- Jason Butler (Drayton & Horsford), Efficiency, Performance & Pensions Oversight.

I am also very honoured to have been appointed Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee. The role of this committee is to scrutinise matters of the Council's finance and how it is run, such as audits, risk management, anti-fraud measures, and treasury management. In my role as Chair I intend to use the position to verify that Norfolk residents are receiving the highest quality of service from a council which has financial sustainability as one of its core principles.

The Reform group submitted a motion at the AGM which was passed by the council. This called for prioritising frontline services, value for money, and evidence-based decision making over symbolic or ideological initiatives, and called for the cabinet member for finance to:

1. Conduct a review of all current Council spending linked to Net Zero and climate related initiatives.
2. Publish a report setting out the total projected cost of these initiatives over the next five years.
3. Ensure that future climate-related expenditure demonstrates measurable benefit to Norfolk residents and clear value for money before approval.

At the AGM it was also decided via a vote that the political assistant role would be abolished. This will save the Council £163,000 per year. It has also not resulted in any job losses as the previous contracts expired at the election.

### **Local Government Re-Organisation (LGR)**

There are plans for Norfolk to undergo the biggest change to local government in around 50 years. Currently, Norfolk has 1 county council and 7 district/borough councils which provide different services. However, under the Government's plans this will be no more. Instead, the councils will be amalgamated into unitary authorities responsible for all the services which the two tiers currently

provide. The Government's favoured approach to this is to have 3 unitary authorities – West Norfolk, Greater Norwich, and East Norfolk. The parishes of the current Waveney Valley Division will all fall under East Norfolk, which encompasses areas such as Diss, Wymondham, Loddon, Great Yarmouth, Aylsham, Cromer, and Fakenham (yes, Fakenham is apparently in East Norfolk). Should these plans proceed there will be elections next May to a shadow unitary authority, with the authority being fully established one year later.

Reform UK is opposed to this shake-up. Norfolk has a strong county identity which will be put under threat by the new council structure. Currently all of Norfolk is served by the County Council. However, under LGR there will be no over-arching authority representing all of Norfolk, and just Norfolk. It will likely cause disruption to vital local services while the transition is taking place, and will be a colossal waste of money. Analysis prepared for Norfolk County Council predicted a net loss of £246 million over 5 years. Along with the new Reform administrations of Essex and Suffolk County Councils we will look at options to oppose LGR, including legal action.

### **East Pye Solar Project**

East Pye Solar Ltd has applied for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). The proposal consists of 9 solar sites with a total generating capacity of up to 500MW which are connected by an underground cable route to a battery energy storage system (BESS), up to three 132 kV project substations and a new National Grid substation. This will encompass an area of approximately 2,718 acres, and will affect the residents of towns/villages such as Great Moulton, Long Stratton, Tasburgh, Hempnall, Brooke, with one section stretching into the Waveney Valley Division north of Woodton.

This will have a negative impact on our community for several reasons:

- **Impact on our Landscape and Heritage.** This project amounts to the industrialisation of the countryside with solar panels, substations, fencing and other infrastructure. This will dramatically alter the rural landscape which is enjoyed by so many locals and visitors alike.
- **Effect on Residents.** There will be a major impact on residents in terms of the view from their homes and the potential reduction in property values. Increased traffic during the construction phase will also have a negative impact.
- **Loss of agricultural land and the resulting impact on food security.** The soil in Norfolk is some of the most fertile in the entire country, and so the land here should be the last place to consider the placement of solar panels. With an ever-increasing population and the urban sprawl already occurring, this is a major issue.
- **Far more suitable places for solar panels.** There are many places to locate solar panels which will not detrimentally impact the wellbeing of residents or result in the loss of our green spaces. These include rooftops, over the top of carparks (also resulting in shade for the cars), and between train tracks.

These I consider to be some the main arguments, but it is not an exhaustive list. I will be doing all I can to oppose this project and will be working with other councillors and the new cabinet on this issue.

Those who would like to register as an interested party with the Planning Inspectorate can do so here (deadline is 10<sup>th</sup> June): <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110014/register/register-have-your-say>

## **Ofsted Report for Children's Services**

Congratulations to all the staff at Norfolk's Children's Services for their fantastic Ofsted Report. They were judged to be Outstanding across the board. This marks a tremendous turnaround from being judged Inadequate back in 2013. They were visited back in February and 5 areas were examined: the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families; the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection; the experiences and progress of children in care; the experiences and progress of care leavers, and overall effectiveness. Inspectors said: "Children in Norfolk receive consistently strong services that impact positively on their and their families' lives. Since the previous inspection in November 2022, leaders have relentlessly continued to strengthen and enhance practice for children, young people and their families."

The full report can be found here: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80418>

## **The Norwich Castle: A Royal Palace Reborn Project**

Norwich Castle won 'Restoration or Conservation Project of the Year' from the Museum Heritage Awards, seeing off Durham University. A prestigious six-year project by the Norfolk Museums Service was praised for its Norman keep restoration, which dramatically improved accessibility to the roof battlements and re-imagined the overall visitor experience. I encourage all to pay a visit. Visiting this museum as part of a school trip was one of my favourite memories growing up, alongside the Time and Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth. I can still smell the smoked fish!

## **Norfolk Community Fund**

The Norfolk Community Fund reopens in June 2026. This programme, created by Norfolk County Council, is designed to support small community-led projects and local voluntary activity. Each one of Norfolk's county councillors has up to £5,000 to distribute within their division. Groups can apply for £200-£2,500 toward a project. Via a Crowdfunding platform, groups will be asked to match 50% of the funding, which will double the impact. Grants under £500 do not require such crowdfunding, although this is still encouraged to increase the total amount dedicated to a project and therefore its effectiveness. So please get in touch if you have a scheme in mind which you believe may be eligible. According to the Crowdfunder website, a total of £326,043 was raised last year for 244 projects across Norfolk.

## **Contact Me**

I encourage residents to contact me with any local concerns or initiatives they would like me to assist with:

Email: [george.boyd.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:george.boyd.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk)

Phone: 01603 224263