

## County Councillor's Report

February 2026

So now we know... or do we?

On 22<sup>nd</sup> January, the Government finally announced that it plans to postpone the County Council elections in Norfolk (and a number of other councils) again.

The Government says its decision is to allow the councils to focus on the work needed to set up new unitary councils that will cover Norfolk. Elections to the new unitary councils are expected to take place in May 2027, with the new councils expected to be up and running in April 2028.

However, it is not quite as clear-cut as that because there is a legal challenge to the postponement that will be heard on 21-22<sup>nd</sup> February. The postponement will only be confirmed if the courts agree the move is legal.

It's a mess. A mess that is entirely of the government's making.

- The elections that were due last year should not have been postponed. There was no justification for it. The County Council will probably cease to exist in 2028 so councillors elected for four years in 2021 will end up serving seven years
- There's still no definite timetable for Local Government Reform. I simply don't understand how senior politicians and experienced civil servants (in the department responsible for local government) could have launched on this journey without any idea of the timetable. At this stage we still don't know for sure when the new councils will be set up or if elections *next year* will go ahead
- Councils should be able to do more than one thing at once. The idea that they need to cancel the elections to have the time prepare for LGR just doesn't sound truthful

So, shouldn't I (and my councillor colleagues) just resign and force a by-election? I have thought about this a lot as you can imagine. I have decided that, at this stage, it is not the right thing to do.

To start with, we still don't know whether the elections will be postponed – that should be decided by the courts at the end of February. We also don't know for certain whether by-elections will even be allowed if councillors do resign.

Most importantly, though, individual councillors resigning will not do what those calling for it want. **This was a government decision – they won't change their mind just because a few Norfolk councillors resign.** It also won't change how things are run at County Hall. The County Council is governed on party political lines. The Conservatives run the council with 52 of the 84 councillors. **To change who runs the council, it would need at least ten *Conservative* councillors to resign. Councillors from other parties, or Independents like myself, resigning, would change nothing.**

I work to hold the people running the County Council to account, and to make sure they don't forget the needs of the people in the twelve parishes I represent. I will carry on doing that to the best of my ability.

That is my position for now. If it looks like my resignation would force a change of mind by the government, of course I will reconsider. If the elections for the new unitary councils do not go ahead next May, I will definitely resign – those new councillors will have the job of running the new councils and it is vital that people have a vote to elect them.

#### Local Member Highways Allowance and Norfolk Community Fund

Assuming the elections are cancelled then I guess the Local Member Highways Allowance and the Norfolk Community Fund will top up again in April. So just a plea to have a think about projects might qualify for funding from these two pots (and remember that there is still money in the Community Fund for this year).

#### Bus shelters

I understand that the deadline to apply for funding for new bus shelters is to be extended from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March. If you would like to apply, let me know and I can send you the paperwork. Remember that the Parish Council would have to contribute 20% of the cost and unfortunately my Local Member Highways Allowance is fully allocated for this financial year so I cannot help.

#### Increase in fees for foster carers

Foster carers in Norfolk will receive a 15% increase in fees as part of Norfolk County Council's plan to recruit and retain more foster carers. The proposals include:

- A 15% uplift in fees for mainstream and kinship carers
- Additional uplifts for mainstream carers looking after children aged 10 and older
- Greater rewards for long service
- An expanded therapeutic support team
- Enhanced practical support

Anyone interested in finding out more about fostering can read about the services here:

[Fostering - Norfolk County Council](#)

#### 5% Council Tax increase proposed

Norfolk County Council's cabinet will consider proposals for a balanced Budget for 2026–27, at a meeting on 26 January. The report includes a recommendation to increase council tax by 4.998%.

The proposals also include £42.3 million in savings and efficiencies.

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