

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 July 2026

COUNCILLOR LUCY SHIRES - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, ESTATES AND PROPERTY SERVICES

For the period June to July 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Finance

- The 2025/26 accounts were closed, and the Outturn position was reported to Members in the July committee cycle. The position provided detailed variance information and outlined the surplus of £0.354m, it was recommended that this surplus was transferred to the New Burdens reserve.
- Following on from the closure of the accounts, the Council's draft Statement of Accounts were prepared and published on the 30 June in line with statutory deadlines.
- The finance team welcomed the new Chief Technical Accountant who started in June.
- The team continue to feed into the LGR process, providing information and support to various workstreams.

Estates

Vacant Property:

- Cornish way. Roof leaks are preventing letting and a roof replacement tender process is progressing. Enquires regarding the vacant units are logged for future lettings
- The Cedars Barns requiring re development continue to be advertised, with no viable interest commercially. Future opportunities are being reconsidered following the receipt of a proposal for community use.
- Fakenham Connect first floor offices are being advertised with some current interest.
- Donkey Shelter –Investigations regarding future opportunities for the building continues.

Leases:

- Approx 77 lease cases in progress or planned.
- Lease negotiations for the RNLI and Rocket House Café at the Rocket House continues along with the covenant holder.
- Formalising the short-term agreement for car parking at Gold Park continues to be delayed as officers await a decision from the Landlord.
- Cabinet have approved a disposal of the Marrams Bowls Club to the tenant and negotiations will now be finalised. Suffield Park bowls club is on hold.

- Lease renewal negotiations for industrial unit at Catfield, Cornish Way with rental increases are progressing following initial rent assessment.
- Cromer Council office – 1 lease renewal negotiation is in progress and a short term new occupation agreement is in negotiation.
- Utility lease for the FLASH project has completed.
- Cabbell Park, football ground and car parking lease renewal is in progress.
- Parking licence nearing completion at North Walsham, legal document finalised and issued to other side for signature.
- Foreshore lease at Happisburgh has Cabinet approval and following some additional negotiation is nearing completion.
- Happisburgh car park lease – Agreement for lease in place subject to NNDC completion of the car park work.
- 2 further easements requests across the district for utility supplies across Council land have been received and are in negotiation. Terms have been agreed for 2 sites with solicitors progressing.
- Funding agreement for works at Itteringham Shop, legal terms is in negotiation.
- Around 12 retail/food trader licences lease renewals to be commenced shortly including rent review.
- 5 Shared equity lease assignments and 2 staircasing transaction in progress.
- Providing support to Economic Growth regarding E-tips project and Environmental services regarding waste service and land ownership investigations.

Disposal:

- There are approx. 115 disposals cases opportunities or in progress.
- Enabling land at Sheringham. A range of alternative options has been investigated and presented.
- Disposal of Highfield Road car park, Fakenham to local housing association continues to progress.
- Mundesley a disposal of amenity land to Parish Council is nearing completion.
- A number of Parish and Town Councils have approached the Council regarding transfers of assets that may be impacted by Local Government Reorganisation with approx. 35 potential disposals in phase 1 to progress.
- Private enquires regarding the acquisition of Council land have been received and being considered.

Acquisitions:

- Continued support to Coastwise/Coastal Team in acquiring land and property at risk of coastal erosion. A further property at Trimingham has completed. Providing support with possible land acquisitions.
- Supporting Housing with purchase of additional properties. 1 further property has completed in Sheringham. 5 properties now under offer and progressing through the legal process.
- Supporting Leisure with negotiations for easement for Holt Country

Park with terms agreed in principle and solicitors are expected to be instructed shortly.

Revenues

National Collection Results for 2025/26

The **Council Tax** collection was 98.34%, slightly down on last year by 0.03% but up on target of 98.20%.

- This means we stay top in Norfolk for the best collectors of council tax!
- We are in the top quartile (top 25%) nationally (which is within the top seventy-three local authorities out of 295).
- We finished 14th out of 295 local authorities nationally.
- We are within the top 4-5% best collectors nationally.
- We are also fourth best collectors out of the Eastern region of forty-five local authorities.

The **Non-Domestic (Business) Rates** collection was 99.12% down on last year by 0.33% and slightly down on target of 99.2%.

- This means we stay top in Norfolk for the best collectors of Non-Domestic (Business) Rates!
- We are in the top quartile (top 25%) nationally (which is within the top seventy-three local authorities out of 295).
- We finished 11th out of 295 local authorities nationally.
- We are within the top 3-4% best collectors nationally.
- We are also second-best collectors out of the Eastern region of forty-five local authorities.

Collection for 2026/27 as of 30 June 2026.

The Council Tax collection was 28.87% against the 30 June 2026 target of 28.85%. We have a small excess in collection to target of 0.02% which is around £31k. To date we have collected over £33.42m to date.

The NDR collection was 28.94% against the 30 June 2026 target of 29.00%. We have a small shortfall in collection to target of 0.06%, which is around £20k. To date we have collected over £9.71m to date.

Property Services

Property Services continue to progress a wide-ranging programme of improvement, maintenance and refurbishment works across the district, with current activity focused on public realm improvements, coastal assets, car parks, public conveniences, temporary accommodation and energy efficiency projects.

Key areas of current work include:

- **Public realm and coastal improvements** – Works are progressing at The Leas, including improvements to the amenity area, boating lake shelter, redundant water feature, lower promenade, signage and related public realm enhancements. Further works are being added to the programme around the eastern promenade.
- **Cromer Pier and associated assets** – The next phase of pier substructure works is being developed, including the dry riser system

recommended by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. Tender activity is planned for pile base encasements and main steel works, with works expected to start in January 2027. Scoping has also commenced for the pier auditorium refurbishment, with procurement support in place.

- **Parks, play areas and open spaces** – Current work includes accessible play provision at Holt Country Park, play area equipment installation across Cromer, Sheringham, Stalham, North Walsham, Fakenham and Wells, and preparation for equipment removal at the FLASH site. Scoping and design work is also ongoing for the Marrams sunken gardens.
- **Building and asset refurbishment** – Programmes are progressing for the Watch House, Rocket House, North Lodge Park, Melbourne Slope, Doctors Steps, the Donkey Shelter, chalet refurbishments in Cromer, and repair works to Cromer church boundary wall.
- **Public conveniences** – Refurbishment and efficiency works remain a key area of focus, including works at Holt Country Park, feasibility work for new provision in Stalham, and the wider public convenience efficiency programme, which is being developed with input from planning, building control and structural engineering colleagues.
- **Energy efficiency and decarbonisation** – Work is ongoing to identify suitable locations for inclusion in the public convenience efficiency programme. Further energy-related projects include improvements at Holt Road offices, roof and energy efficiency works at Cornish Way industrial units, and solar and air source heat pump proposals at 46 Lawson Way, Sheringham.
- **Temporary accommodation** – The temporary accommodation housing portfolio continues to grow, with 32 units currently held and further acquisitions expected. Major refurbishment works are due to commence at 46 Lawson Way, Sheringham, including asbestos removal, solar installation and the Council's first air source heat pump.
- **Car parks and EV infrastructure** – Tender documentation is being finalised for the district-wide car park refurbishment scheme, likely to include sites in Cromer, Sheringham, North Walsham and Wells. Current car park activity also includes surface improvements, entrance works, EV charging provision and ongoing maintenance of the Council's parking estate.
- **Operational compliance and staffing** – Property Services staff have received external training and PPE in relation to damp and mould recognition and treatment under Awaab's Law. Recruitment to the Asset Management Officer post has also been completed, with the postholder due to start in late August.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Finance

- Recruitment has started to bring in a new fixed term post - Chief Financial Accountant.

- After the completion of the draft statement of accounts, the team will continue to compile the detailed working papers to support the external audit process which is scheduled for the autumn.
- The first forecast outturn position is due for completion at the end of July, period 4. This will provide members with an initial budget monitoring position for 2026/27 along with any relevant updates and recommendations.

Revenues

Action Plans

Revenues have action plans to increase ebill take-up, to reduce costs in printing paper and postage costs.

Ebills for 2026/27 as of 30 June 2026.

ebills increased to 19.03% customers for Council Tax and 17.10% for Non-Domestic (Business) Rates.

Second Homes Work

We continue to deal with enquiries relating to second home premiums and to reduce avoidance of the premium.

We continue to receive FOIs regarding second homes.

Training/Development

- A revenues officer is undergoing her level 3 certificate in Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV).
- Two temporary revenues officer apprentices have completed twelve months of their 18 months level 3 Business Administration qualifications.
- We have another temporary revenue officer who has started her 18 months level 3 Business Administration qualifications and is specialising in Non-Domestic (Business) Rates.
- A temporary revenues officer has completed twelve months out of a 15-month revenues trainee position.
- The revenues manager is currently the Vice-Chairman of the IRRV East Anglian Association and one of the revenues team leaders has joined him on the IRRV East Anglian Association Executive.

Service Improvements

Online forms - reviewing and improving the most used customer paper forms is continuing. We have gone live with the following forms:

- Council Tax Moves
- Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Moves
- Council Tax Application for Single Persons Discount
- Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Set up a Direct Debit
- Council Tax Set up a Direct Debit
- Council Tax Offer of Payment Arrangement
- Council Tax Notification of Death
- Non-Domestic (Business) Rates Small Business Rates Review

- Council Tax Carers Relative and Unpaid
- Council Tax Second Home Premium Review form
- Contact us form
- Council Tax Empty Property Review form
- Council Tax Severe Mentally Impaired form.
- Online ebills sign up form.

Property Services

Property Services are supporting wider Council priorities, including preparations for the arrival of a film production company on 27 July, which involves temporary staff relocation and preparation of the overflow car park for trailers and containers.

Regular liaison is also continuing with the RNLI project delivery team to support the planned return to the Sheringham boat station. The RNLI intend to use the local supply chain through open tender, with an operational return targeted for May/June 2027.

3 Meetings attended

- LGR Knowledge Exchange - County Council Finance – providing the districts with an overview of current County Council finance and funding streams. This aimed to provide better context to finance workstreams.
- Norfolk Joint Finance LGR event bringing together all the finance workstreams and to meet colleagues at other authorities.