

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 September 2026

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

For the period July to September 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Democratic Services

The team has been busy supporting additional meetings of the Development Committee and the newly established Cllr Community Grants Fund Panel, which held its first meeting on 27th July 2026.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has undertaken a survey on mobile connectivity across the district, and the response has been very encouraging, with over 400 responses in the first 3 weeks. It is intended to run the survey until mid-September and then collate the data and report it back to the Committee.

Engagement with the E-democracy YouTube channel continues to grow, with 324 subscribers and 28,880 views to date.

Legal

Contracts and Commercial

Current work includes various agreements and contracts. We are also supporting the Fakenham Flash project, including commercial, property, funding, operator and lease arrangements, with recent advice on the new power station lease.

Planning

Planning work includes agreements for major developments at Cromer, Stalham and North Walsham, alongside advice on biodiversity, nutrient neutrality and smaller sites. We continue to review Planning Enforcement Notices and advise on Lawful Development Certificates. We continue to receive Assets of Community Value applications.

Housing

Housing work includes homelessness reviews, temporary accommodation matters, possession proceedings and advice on belongings and pets left in accommodation. We are also advising on implementation of Awaab's Law and the Renters Rights Act 2025, including enforcement options against private landlords.

Code of Conduct

There are currently 11 Code of Conduct complaints, including those that are subject to full investigation.

Litigation

Litigation work includes council tax and business rates recovery, orders for sale.

Information Governance

Information Governance work includes statutory information requests, data protection advice, information sharing, privacy statements, breach assessments, internal reviews and ICO referrals. Response performance remains at or above 95%.

Revenues

Collection for 2026/27 as of 31 August 2026.

The Council Tax collection was 45.91% against the 31 August 2026 target of 46%. We have a shortfall in collection to target of 0.09% which is around £97k. To date we have collected over £53.150m to date.

The NDR collection was 51.27% against the 31 August 2026 target of 51.35%. We have a shortfall in collection to target of 0.08%, which is around £24k. To date we have collected over £17.154m to date.

Estates

Vacant Property:

- Cornish way. Roof leaks are preventing letting and a roof replacement tender process is progressing. Enquires regarding the vacant units continue to be 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 – works to return the building back to chalets is expected to start this autumn. There remains strong demand with 100 people on the waiting list for Cromer East Chalets.

Leases:

- Approx 70 lease cases in progress or planned.
- Lease negotiations for the RNLI and Rocket House Café at the Rocket House continues along with negotiation 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.
- Lease renewal negotiations for industrial unit at Catfield, Cornish Way with rental increases are progressing following initial rent assessment.
- Cromer Council office - 2 lease renewal negotiation is in progress.
- Fakenham Connect - 2 lease renewal negotiation is in progress
- Cabbell Park, football ground and car parking lease renewal continues to progress.
- Parking licence completed at North Walsham.
- Foreshore lease at Happisburgh has completed.
- 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.
- Around 12 retail/food trader licences lease renewals to be commenced shortly including rent review.
- 4 Shared equity lease assignments and 2 staircasing transaction in progress, 1 lease assignment completed.
- Providing support to Economic Growth regarding E-tips project

- Lease advice provided relating to the Food Waste project and Cromer Pier.

Disposal:

- There are approx. 115 disposals cases opportunities or in progress.
- Enabling land at Sheringham. A range of alternative options has been previously 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.
- Marrams Bowls Club disposal currently with solicitors to progress including updated lease for putting green operator.

Acquisitions:

- Continued support to Coastwise/Coastal Team in acquiring land and property at risk of coastal erosion. Providing support with possible land acquisitions.
- Supporting Housing with purchase of additional properties. 1 further property has completed in Cromer. 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 instructed

Property Services

Property Services continues to deliver a wide-ranging programme of improvement, maintenance and refurbishment works across the district. Current activity covers public realm improvements, coastal and community assets, public conveniences, temporary accommodation, energy-efficiency measures, car parks and electric vehicle infrastructure.

Key areas of current work include:

- **Public realm and coastal improvements** – A programme of improvements at The Leas continues to be delivered in liaison with the local member. Works to the horsebox shelters, promenade shelters, redundant water features, pathway lighting and cabling have been completed. New signage will be installed following delivery. Property Services is also supporting the district-wide E-TIP programme through the preparation of installation bases.
- **Cromer Pier and associated assets** – The latest phase of substructure engineering works has been completed within budget and without downtime for the pier operator. Superstructure painting was also completed in readiness for the pier's 125th anniversary celebrations. Consultants have been appointed to progress the next phase of substructure repairs, including pile-base encasements and the dry riser system recommended by Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. Scoping for the auditorium refurbishment is also progressing, with the works expected to be coordinated alongside the substructure programme between January and June 2027. Design meetings are being held with Openwide to ensure the operational requirements of the end user are fully considered.
- **Parks, play areas and open spaces** – The programme of play equipment

installation across Cromer, Sheringham, Stalham, North Walsham, Fakenham and Wells has been completed. An external consultant has been appointed to progress additional accessible play provision at Holt Country Park. Removal of the former play equipment at the FLASH site is also complete. Scoping and design work for the Marrams sunken gardens continues, with preliminary designs expected shortly.

- **Community and leisure facilities** – The scope for the Cabbell Park changing facility is being revised to ensure the project can be delivered within budget, after which the works will be tendered. Investigations into surface water affecting the football pitch have been completed and a drainage scheme is being developed. Remedial works to the splash pad at The Reef Leisure Centre have commenced, including replacement of the sub-base and installation of a rubber crumb finish with a ten-year warranty.
- **Building and asset refurbishment** – Works to the Watch House have been completed within the agreed programme and budget. Tender returns for the Rocket House have been received, with shortlisted suppliers progressing through post-tender interviews and works expected to commence following contract award. Planning and procurement activity continues for North Lodge Park, alongside installation of a greenhouse and shed for the Friends of North Lodge Park. Repair works to Cromer church boundary wall have commenced, while projects at Melbourne Slope, Doctors Steps and the Donkey Shelter remain in development. The lower storage area at the Donkey Shelter is complete and ready for occupation. Scoping also continues for chalet refurbishment works in Cromer and Sheringham.
- **Public conveniences** – Refurbishment works at Holt Country Park have been completed within the gentlemen's and accessible facilities. Work to the ladies' facilities was suspended following the discovery of a bat, with recommencement and installation of the new foul tank planned for November. The feasibility report for new public convenience provision in Stalham has now been received, and the Newgate's Lane facilities in Wells have been completed. The wider public convenience efficiency programme continues to be developed with input from planning, building control and structural engineering colleagues. Queens Road in Fakenham and Stearman's Yard have been selected for the next phase of works.
- **Energy efficiency and decarbonisation** – Work is progressing on energy-efficiency improvements at the Holt Road offices, including assessment of roof loadings for photovoltaic panels and consideration of any roofing works required before installation. Tender returns for roof and energy-efficiency works at the Cornish Way industrial units in North Walsham have been received and are being evaluated. The tender for roofing and damp-proofing works at The Cedars in North Walsham is also live, with returns due in mid-October.
- **Temporary accommodation** – The Council's temporary accommodation portfolio comprises 32 units, with further acquisitions anticipated. Major refurbishment of the newly acquired property in Sheringham, has been completed and the property has been handed back to Housing. The works included new glazing, rewiring, plumbing, an air source heat pump and rooftop photovoltaic panels.
- **Car parks and EV infrastructure** – Tender documentation for the district-wide car park refurbishment programme is undergoing final checks before issue, supported by an appointed consultant. The programme is likely to include sites in Cromer, Sheringham, North Walsham and Wells. Improvement works to a number of unmade car parks, including pothole repairs, surface grading and new tarmac entrances, were completed ahead of the busy summer period. Planning permission has been granted for a new

entrance and roadway at Runtun Road car park, and replacement concrete posts are on order.

- **Electric vehicle charging** – The Council's electric vehicle chargers transferred to a new supplier in October 2025 following increased costs and the absence of repair and maintenance support under the previous arrangement. Migration issues have arisen because of outdated equipment, with some units assessed as beyond economical repair. Replacement contactless units have been installed at Morris Street in Sheringham.
- **Operational compliance and staffing** – Property Services staff have received external training and bespoke personal protective equipment to support compliance with Awaab's Law in relation to the identification and treatment of damp and mould. Preparations are now under way for the second phase of the legislation. Recruitment to the Asset Management Officer vacancy has been completed and the new postholder has commenced in post

Finance

- The first revenue and capital budget monitoring of 2026/27 has been produced. The revenue forecast outturn position as at P4 is indicating a Full Year surplus of £367k
- The finance team have been working through external audit requests in preparation for the upcoming audit.
- Recruitment for maternity cover for a group accountant position has been successful

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Democratic Services

UK Power Networks will be attending the December meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to respond to questions from members on the impact of electricity supply issues across the district.

Revenues

Action Plans

Revenues have action plans to increase ebill take-up, to reduce costs in printing paper and postage costs. This work continues with many improvements.

Ebills for 2026/27 as of 30 June 2026.

ebills increased by 233 customers for Council Tax and increased by 54 for Non-Domestic (Business) Rates. to 17.49% (10,037) and 19.55% (1,620) respectively.

Second Homes Work

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

Training/Development

- A revenues officer is undergoing her level 3 certificate in Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation (IRRV).
- Two temporary revenues officers (one 18 months level 3 Business Administration apprentice and one a trainee) have been appointed to two vacant permeant posts.
- 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.

- The revenues manager has been elected to the role of Chairman of the East Anglian Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation 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.

We are currently working on the Major Works Class D Discount form alongside discount and exemption review forms, so we are able to save paper and postage before the annual reviews take place from October 2026.

Estates

Annual rent review of chalets and beach huts to be undertaken.

Service charges to be finalised and issued to tenants along with recharging or insurance and other tenant obligations

Finance

- **Budget Setting 2027/28** - Preparations are now underway for setting the annual budget for 2027/28. Detailed working papers are being prepared for circulation to Budget holders, these include staffing and other direct cost budgets. Meetings and discussion will take place over the next couple of months with the aim of providing members with an early forecast position.
- **Capital Bids 2027/28** - bid forms have now been circulated for completion by officers with new capital projects requests. These will be reviewed by Finance and compiled for consideration by Members as part of the budget setting process.
- **External Audit 2025/26** – The start of the formal audit fieldwork is currently timetabled to commence early October

3 Meetings attended

