

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 September 2026

COUNCILLOR ADAMS - CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGY, COUNTYWIDE WORKING AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS, PERFORMANCE AND HR SERVICES

For the period July to September 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Local Government Reorganisation

On Monday 7th September 2026 the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (the Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner) made a statement in the House of Commons in relation to the current programme of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The statement, which has been widely reported in national and local media, advised that the Government was “withdrawing” the Minded To decisions announced on 25th March 2026 to establish unitary authorities in Essex, Hampshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, and “pausing” subsequent decisions in 14 shire county areas announced on 22nd July 2026; pending a review of the whole LGR process.

This means that the proposals to introduce three unitary councils in Norfolk from 1st April 2028 are now formally withdrawn. All preparatory work being undertaken by partners in Norfolk on LGR has therefore been stopped.

Following the Secretary of State’s announcement there have been a number of briefings delivered by Jim McMahon, Minister of State for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth, and his MHCLG civil servant team, to share more detail of the review. In these briefings it was stated that the review will be “progressed at pace”, but no specific timetable outlined and no details provided as to the form of the review. At this stage it is not clear whether this will be an “internal” MHCLG / Government review, whether it will receive representations from local authorities and other bodies, whether it will be purely in respect of process or whether new, amended or updated submissions can be made. However, it was stated that the result of the review would be reported in due course to Parliament.

Minister McMahon did state, however, that the Government continued to hold the view that a unitary form of local government was the most accountable form of local governance alongside the introduction of Strategic Authorities – ie the devolution agenda, which, under the Rewiring the State programme, the Government wished to move forward with – probably in advance of any

revised proposals for LGR. It was therefore stated, given the review of current proposals, that LGR could not realistically be progressed to the previously proposed timetable of new authorities being established on 1st April 2028 and that April 2029 was likely to be the earliest date at which any new councils proposed post the review could be established.

Given the review of LGR, the Secretary of State advised that arrangements should be made for scheduled local government elections to existing authorities to take place in May 2027. This would mean that full council elections to North Norfolk District Council would take place on 6th May 2027 for an assumed four-year term (which could be shortened if revised proposals came forward for unitary councils post the review and were confirmed through Structural Changes Orders). The necessary arrangements for elections to North Norfolk District Council in May 2027 will therefore now be made.

So what does this mean for us here at North Norfolk District Council?

- Since the Secretary of State's announcement on 7th September we have ceased all work with local partners on LGR.
- Looking ahead we will listen to what the Government has to say regarding the progress of their LGR review and, as appropriate, work with local partners in submitting any response to the review.
- We will look to work with local partners and the Government to understand what a devolution deal and establishment of a Strategic Authority for Norfolk (and Suffolk) might mean for our communities, residents and businesses in supporting local growth in a fair and equitable way, given the advantages already being conferred on areas with established Strategic Authorities and elected mayoral structures.
- We will prepare to deliver the full council elections to North Norfolk District Council on 6th May 2027.
- We will need to carefully consider and develop a strategy for dealing with the financial and budgetary challenges the ending of LGR will mean for the District Council in setting future annual budgets (recognising the context in which district authority budgets are already being squeezed relative to metropolitan, unitary and county council budgets which have to provide statutory adult and childrens services) – particularly our existing concerns around the affordability of introducing a weekly food waste collection service across our rural district and other New Burdens pressures introduced by the Government such as the Renters Rights Act and need to prepare a new Local Plan by December 2028 and the Prime Minister's recent statements about ending rough sleeping and homelessness.

Human Resources

The HR Team are busy working through the upcoming changes detailed in the Employment Rights Act, those taking place in October 2026 are listed below,

- **Dismissal and Rehire** – becomes automatically unfair
- **Harassment** – organisations will be liable for 3rd party harassment unless they can show reasonable steps have been taken to prevent, all reasonable steps should be taken to prevent sexual harassment
- **Employment Tribunal Time Limits** – will increase from 3 months to 6 months
- **Additional Trade Union Rule Changes**
 - Duty to inform of the right to join Trade Union
 - Updates to Trade Union right of access to the workplace
 - Right to reasonable accommodation and facilities to carry out duties
 - Right to time off for Union Equality reps to carry out duties
- **Increased protection against detriment for Industrial Action**
- **Public Sector outsourcing ‘two tier code’** – to avoid different Terms and Conditions for ex-public sector employees and private sector employees
- **New Adult Social Care Negotiating body**

In light of the above all officers with management responsibilities have been provided with training in relation to the Prevention of Sexual Harassment, the team is working on rolling training out to all officers in the near future.

We are working with Comms to carry out a refresh of the intranet and internal comms within NNDC.

During the months of July and August, September the Team have been busy in onboarding 21 new officers to all areas of NNDC.

Public Sector Challenge

On Friday 11th September, 22 members of staff from teams across the council used their volunteer days participating in the 2026 Public Sector Challenge event. The event, now in its fourth year, was held in Shropshire, and was raising funds for the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK, with the approx. 600 participants choosing to walk routes of 8.5, 16, 21.5 or 26 miles. Between them the NNDC team walked a total or more than 500 miles and raised in excess of £1300 in local sponsorship for these great charities.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Human Resources

Preparation work is progressing in relation to developing a range of managers guidance and toolkits for use by line managers in all people related matters.

3 Meetings attended
Attended: • Sheringham Little Theatre • Norfolk Wildlife Trust • Trading Standards & Norfolk Constabulary • Norfolk Leaders • NNUH Trust • East Norfolk Unitary Council Joint Voluntary Committee