

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

August 2026

COUNCILLOR LIZ WITHINGTON - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY, LEISURE & OUTREACH

For the period August 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Tourism

Visit North Norfolk (VNN), which supports local businesses and delivers marketing campaigns to attract visitors to the area, also runs campaigns, competitions, initiatives, training and promotional materials for attractions and accommodation providers, alongside new commercial opportunities on E-TIPS screens (see below). In response to the identified squeeze on visitor spending, VNN is offering a range of discount vouchers, providing a tangible benefit for tourists and visitors.

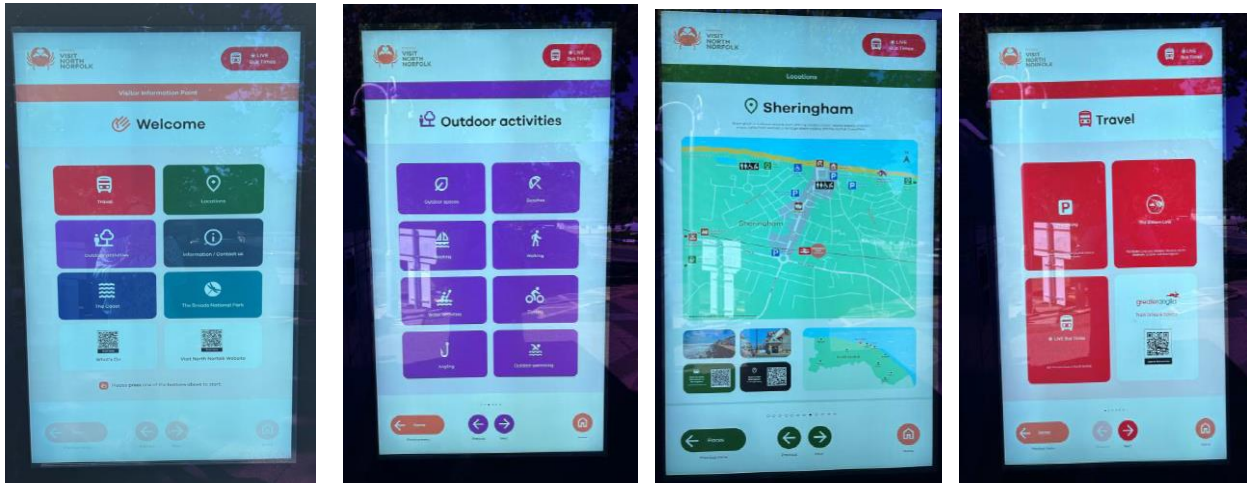
Anecdotal feedback seems to suggest the summer season was busy across the destination, with an expected rise in staycationing, however, whether that has fed through into the bottom lines of local businesses remains to be seen. VNN has therefore instigated a survey to garner feedback on how the summer season has gone, the results of which will be reported at its annual conference (November 2026) (for which a small number of tickets are still available – delegates can book via the website [2026 Annual Conference - North Norfolk](#)). This year's conference guest speaker is Benjamin Mee, motivational speaker and author of 'We Bought a Zoo'.

What's On listings remain free to *all* groups, events and attractions to provide the best and most wide-ranging offer to our tourists.

VNN has launched its autumn activity as part of the 'Nip Back to North Norfolk' marketing campaign – you can see the video on VNN's home page: www.visitnorthnorfolk.com. The campaign will promote visits during this season highlighting nature, dark skies, events, history and heritage, walking, attractions and food and drink (all influences for an autumn visit). The campaign will be promoted digital platforms as well as through ecomms.

The electronic tourist information points (eTIP) project (reported previously) has so far seen the installation of the first five display screens, which are now live and showing both general public information and commercial content (at Greater Anglia stations). All twenty allocated advertisement slots have been sold, with income supporting the initiative and our destination management partner, Visit North Norfolk, which is leading this initiative. Plans are progressing for the installation of five more screens (with one more in planning) which will go live as soon

as the units are in place. Both the uptake of commercial advertising and web traffic to the information provided will be monitored and reported as appropriate to the VNN Board.



Culture

The next North Norfolk Cultural Partnership networking meeting is planned for Sept 22nd at Wells Maltings. This is posted on Eventbrite and any creative industry representative in the area is welcome to attend. Please register for your free ticket here:

https://lnkd.in/ezkvC4_C

Ongoing promotion of cultural events and activities are via the Visit North Norfolk website and those posting events are encouraged to tag the partnership by using @Northnorfolkcp. Admin support for the partnership is provided by Sheringham Little Theatre, which enables continuity and sustainability for the sector as we move towards LGR.

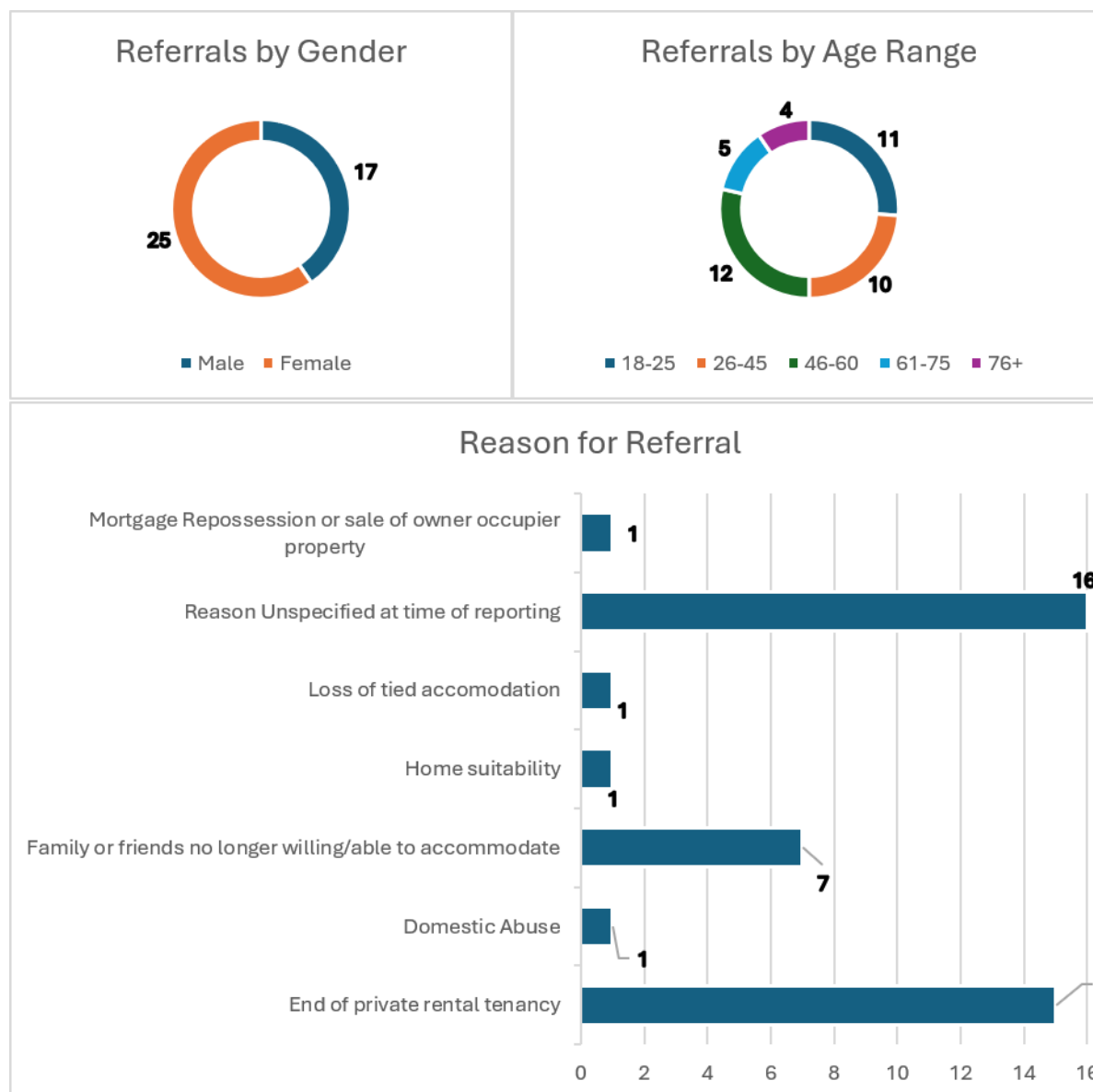
Expressions of Interest were submitted to the Government's Creative Foundations Fund (CFF) Round 2: for Cromer Pavillion Theatre and Sheringham Little Theatre. Both are for projects in Strand 1 of the Fund (£100,000 - £1m) for refurbishment, alterations and improvements that will help with the longer-term financial sustainability of those important local cultural facilities. This fund is extremely competitive as it supports buildings and equipment expenditure across the Country. We await feedback, which is expected in September.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Homelessness Prevention

During August, the team received **6** new referrals from Housing Options and assisted **42** households threatened by, at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Of those **42** households, the primary customers were divided as follows:



Within these 42 households there are 35 dependents, therefore the Community Outreach Officers are working to prevent or rectify homelessness for **77** individuals.

The Community Outreach Officers work closely with our colleagues in Housing Options and other services to support people at risk of and experiencing homelessness. We offer a person-centric, holistic approach and meet people where they feel comfortable which might be their home, the local library or a nearby community setting. The Community Outreach Officers are skilled in active listening and this, coupled with meeting people in a familiar environment, means that people open up to them and build trusted relationships. The support we offer is manifold, for example:

- encouraging and empowering people to communicate and meet with landlords and estate agents
- supporting people to search for private rental properties online and accompanying them to viewings
- supporting tenants with additional needs and requirements to maintain or secure accommodation
- completion of paperwork such as estate agents' pre-registration forms and Your Choice Your Home applications.
completion of other documents such as Attendance Allowance forms, Universal Credit applications, Income and Expenditure forms, etc.
- using our vast knowledge of the voluntary, statutory and charitable sector support available in North Norfolk to refer into the right services for mental health, employment, domestic abuse and financial support
- gaining ID and setting up bank accounts
- accompanying residents to food banks and larders, Citizens Advice, etc

The Community Outreach Officers meet people where they're at and support them with the challenges they face in regards to their accommodation needs and homelessness challenges.

Collaborations and new connections

This month, Officers have made a number of new connections and worked collaboratively with various services that help to create a supportive network around those facing or at risk of homelessness.

These connections and collaborations include North Walsham Good Neighbour Scheme, NIDAS, Department of Work and Pensions, Walking with the Wounded, Norfolk County Council Adult Social Care, the Probation Service, Public Health, NNDC Housing Options, NNDC Early Help and Prevention service, Digital transformation and Holt Community Centre.

Homelessness Prevention Case Study

Mr and Mrs T are an older couple who have been renting a private property on a farm estate for over 40 years.

The estate manager had approached the couple and informed them that the owners were planning on selling up, and that they should expect an eviction notice. For many months this was not served, leaving Mr and Mrs T unsure about what might be happening.

After some time, they were approached by the manager again and finally served with a notice of eviction.

Mr and Mrs T do not have access to the internet, and so they were supported by a Community Outreach Officer to apply to join the housing register through 'Your Choice Your Home'. Checks were completed around income and benefit eligibility to ensure they were receiving the maximum amount.

The eviction has caused the couple great distress, and as a result, the Community Outreach Officer made referrals for wellbeing and mental health support. A meeting with the estate manager was also attended with the Officer to offer support and advocacy.

Assistance was given to apply for properties with a local connection requirement in an area where their daughter currently lives.

Mr and Mrs T were offered a bungalow in this area, and a tenancy was successfully agreed.

Other Service News

Poppyland Radio Shows:

In August we recorded one show about:

Walk Felbrigg: Felbrigg Hall and Gardens is one of the National Trust properties in North Norfolk. The beautiful 17th century house which is set in 580 acres of parkland welcomes visitors all year round. In addition to its cafe and bookshop, Felbrigg offers many activities and has recently expanded its portfolio to include Walk Felbrigg. Following a successful trial in January, Walk Felbrigg officially launched in May 2026. Walk Felbrigg offers inclusive, accessible, free guided walks at 11.30am on the first and third Wednesday of the month and at 1.30pm on the first Saturday of the month. Complimentary community walks can also be arranged. Walk Felbrigg provides an excellent opportunity to get outside in nature, learn about Felbrigg Hall and Gardens, meet new people and enjoy some gentle exercise.

PositiviTea Events:

One PositiviTea event was held in August, on Tuesday 4th August, at Holt Community Centre. Attendees were mostly younger individuals, and a particular interest was noted in the North Norfolk Community Development and Digital Transformation stands.

Upcoming events include:

8th September 2026 – Cromer Community Centre, Garden Street, Cromer from 10am to midday

2nd October 2026 – Coastal Health and Wellbeing, Wells Community Hospital, Mill Road, Wells-Next-The-Sea from 10am to midday

13th October 2026 – The Stables, Stalham Baptist Church, Stalham from 10am to midday

5th November 2026 - Sheringham Salvation Army Hall, Cremer Street, Sheringham from 10am to midday.

North Norfolk Health & Wellbeing Partnership:

A Task & Finish Group met on 13th August to discuss ideas for the Crisis Resilience Fund. Since the meeting, a high-level overview has been sent to the Hardship Board for their consideration and comments.

Leisure

Leisure Contract

Despite the lovely weather and traditionally slow time of year for Leisure Centres the number of visits across the contract actually increased on May and June. In July the contract achieved 39,445 visits whilst August saw 40,832 visits – including over 20000 at the Reef, which is excellent. At the end of August the number of fitness memberships held was 3480, and the number of children on the swim lesson programme remained steady at 983.

Countryside

All countryside sites have been very busy over the summer holidays as some people sought the shade of the woodlands rather than the heat of the beaches. We are happy to report that despite the heightened fire risk caused by the extended hot & dry spell visitors treated the sites well and followed advice to ensure that we saw no issues with fire across our sites.

The extended dry spell has, and will continue to, cause trees to struggle. A lot of extra practical tree work is required this Autumn and Winter as many trees are already declining in health as a result. We expect this decline to continue to be felt over the course of the next 12 months at least, which will require ongoing and careful monitoring and maintenance. Planned maintenance and thinning of some sites, in line with our felling licences, will also begin shortly. Fortunately, the Ranger team is once again back to full strength with the appointment of two rangers.

Our Green Futures Youth Project has continued over the summer holidays with Muddy Boots Youth and Archery sessions delivered. A reminder that these sessions are free to attend for young people

aged 11-19 (up to 25 with additional needs) who live or are educated in North Norfolk. We have also secured an additional £4000 funding to continue this project into 2027



Muddy Boots Youth Bug Hotel

Blue Flag Beaches & Foreshore

A new Seafront Inspector has joined the team to monitor our main resorts, working on an annualised hours basis you will see him patrolling more in the summer season and less in the winter to meet demands.

The lifeguards season officially finished on September 13th and officers will be holding an end of season de-brief with the RNLI in early October. The very busy early season continued throughout the summer so it is expected that the number of interventions will be reported as high this year, but the number of major incidents remained relatively low. The RNLI did utilise extra guards at some beaches throughout the summer to cope with the 'demand', which is unusual.

The team are working on new jet-ski signage for the beaches where the most activity is known to take place. It has been a relatively quiet year in terms of correspondence around jet-ski use however we want to continue to be on the front foot in terms of advice and education.

Markets

Trade remains very consistent and there is a good atmosphere amongst the traders. This has been supported by the appointment of a permanent Market Supervisor. This years themed markets have proven disappointing and will be reviewed at the end of the year following the Christmas market.

Pier Pavilion Theatre

With 9 days to go of the summer show numbers for the Summer Show sat at 20180 tickets sold, which is down on both 2025 and 2024. This is a nationwide trend for theatres and the team from Openwide are discussing ways in which this can be addressed in future years. In contrast concert sales are very strong this year with 21471 tickets sold by mid September, and the Christmas Show is about where it was expected to be at this stage.

Due to several complications throughout the process unfortunately Tides new Fish and Chip offer was not ready to open this summer and is set to open at Easter 2027 instead.

Physical Activity Development

Active Communities Officer Updates

Big Norfolk Holiday Fun – 10 providers delivered summer holiday activity sessions which were free to attend by means tested free school meal eligible children. A range of offers were available right across the district providing enriching activities and healthy meals to attendees. Our Active Communities Officer and Leisure Services Manager visited new provider PGL in Overstrand to audit their provision, which was very impressive.



Library Hire Hubs – the sports equipment has now been logged and coded by the library service, and delivered to each of the three libraries involved in this – Fakenham, Cromer and North Walsham. Various sports equipment is available to hire from each site for anybody who has a valid library card and although we do not have any official stats back from the libraries at this early stage we do know that three different pieces of equipment were hired in the first couple of days at North Walsham. We will be following up in the coming weeks.

Junior Parkruns - The team are still working to bring two new junior park runs to the district – one in Fakenham and one in North Walsham. At present the Fakenham event is closer to being ready, with initial funding secured and their Parkrun Directors working to get it started ASAP. North Walsham is slightly behind but we are still hopeful that this will follow soon after.

2	Forthcoming Activities and Developments.
3	Meetings attended North Norfolk Cultural Partnership x3 Visit North Norfolk Norfolk Joint Museums Committee Norfolk Record Office Committee –apologies Community Rail Partnership Puppet Tree Priory Patch
Officers Representing the Portfolio of Culture, Arts and Heritage and Tourism	