



Norfolk County Council

Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates

Updated 11 July 2024

This weekly briefing is intended as a resource to keep you up to date with the latest information and advice.

Service updates: The most up to date information on council services can be found at [Norfolk County Council services disruptions](#).

Norfolk County Council updates

Norfolk Libraries – Summer Reading Challenge 2024

The Summer Reading Challenge is a highly successful national programme aimed at maintaining or improving the literacy of 4-11-year-olds over the long summer break. It's key to our strategy in supporting children to become more confident readers and is a tool to promote the benefits of reading to families.

Last year 11,261 children joined the Summer Reading Challenge in Norfolk (an increase of 27% on the previous year) and this year we hope that number will grow even more.

This year's theme is 'Marvelous Makers' and is about creativity. It has been developed by The Reading Agency in partnership with Create, a leading arts charity, and public libraries. Children are being encouraged to explore new books and stories while taking part in free library activities - from arts and crafts to music, dance and more. There is a booklist for inspiration, but the emphasis this year is on the fact that children can read anything they like - from comics to recipe books - to take part in the challenge and collect rewards for their reading.

The library service recommends reading around six different books, but children can set their own reading goals. There is also a mini-challenge available so that pre-school children don't miss out.

Find out more about the reading challenge, summer events and how to take part on our library webpages [here](#).

NHS Campaign – Happy Healthy holidays

Ahead of the school summer holidays, the NHS has launched its annual Happy Healthy Holidays campaign which urges residents and holidaymakers to look after their health and wellbeing so they can enjoy a happy healthy holiday this summer.

The campaign is supported by Public Health at Norfolk County Council and Visit Norfolk who are keen for visitors to stay healthy while on day trips and holidays.

The announcement from Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System includes local support and guidance such as advice on staying cool and hydrated, stocking home medicine cabinets and being mindful of the need to check in on older and more vulnerable neighbours. There are also links to local services and to practical tips such as how to be tick aware and keeping safe on or near water.

For more health advice, service information and top tips, visit their Happy Healthy Holidays webpage here.

Scrutiny Committee to consider non-residential adult social care charging policy

Norfolk County Council's scrutiny committee will consider a report on the non-residential adult social care charging policy next week. The report sets out proposed changes that would bring the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) in line with the minimum level set by national government.

The measures are being considered as part of savings that Norfolk County Council needs to make to balance its budget for 2024/25 and to address medium term financial projections of a potential £188m budget shortfall over the period of 2025-2029.

Councillors will also have the opportunity to examine findings from the public consultation that was carried out earlier this year.

The scrutiny committee will consider the report when it meets at 10am on Wednesday 17 July. You can read the papers and watch the meeting online, live or afterwards.

Norfolk celebrates 500 refugees resettled

Norfolk is celebrating the milestone of helping over 500 refugees build new lives in the county over the past seven years.

Since 2017, 501 refugees have been resettled in Norfolk with help from Norfolk County Council's People from Abroad Team. These individuals have built new, independent lives in Norfolk, safe from the persecution they were forced to flee.

They have settled in Norfolk since the opening of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons scheme in February 2017, which was subsequently incorporated into the government's UK Resettlement Scheme that continues to support refugees. The individuals resettled in Norfolk were referred to the United Kingdom by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. As part of these schemes, work to support these refugees is funded by the UK government and is carried out by Norfolk County Council in collaboration with all seven district, borough and city councils, health and voluntary sector partners.

Many of those who resettle in Norfolk have to do so with nothing but the items they can carry with them: to help them build their new life, members of the public can donate goods to money to build a new home. Find out what items are most urgently needed, and how you

can support refugees settling in Norfolk more generally, [on the Help support refugee resettlement webpage](#).

National updates

Prime Minister outlines first steps for change

Alongside the government's five national missions, which are their long-term objectives, the Prime Minister has recently set out his proposed [first steps for change](#) that he says will make an immediate impact on people's lives.

These include:

- Delivering economic stability, focusing on growing the economy and keeping to tough spending rules to keep taxes, inflation and mortgages as low as possible.
- Cutting NHS waiting times by delivering 40,000 more appointments each week during evenings and weekends; doubling the number of NHS CT and MRI scanners; delivery of a dentistry package to include 700,000 urgent appointments each year – all to be paid for by cracking down on tax avoidance and loopholes in the tax system.
- Launching a new border security command.
- Setting up Great British Energy, a publicly owned clean-power company paid for by a windfall tax on oil and gas giants.
- Cracking down on anti-social behaviour - putting extra neighbourhood police and PCSO's back on the beat; setting up a new network of youth hubs to give young people at risk of being drawn into crime the support they need; implementing tougher penalties for offenders and introducing new regulations to make it easier to clamp down on drug dealing, drinking and those repeatedly wreaking havoc in town centres and problem areas.
- Recruiting 6,500 new teachers in key subjects where there are shortages – paid for by ending tax breaks for private schools; undertaking a review of the curriculum to develop creativity, digital and communication skills.

National Wealth Fund announced

The Chancellor Rachel Reeves has [announced](#) a National Wealth Fund (NWF), to be launched with £7.3 billion from the Treasury.

The government funding money will come from a windfall tax on oil and gas companies, the closing of tax loopholes as well as further funding to be announced at the next budget. The funding has been allocated so investments can be made "immediately" in areas such as ports, manufacturing and renewable energy. The NWF aims to attract £3 of private investment for every £1 of public money invested for key industries.

NWF investments will be managed by the existing UK Infrastructure bank with support from a revamped British Business bank.

The NWF is expected to play a central role in the government's industrial strategy and to make transformative investments across the country supporting thousands of good jobs. The government says that the NWF will also work with local partners, including Mayors, to bring together a finance and investment offer that supports the needs of local areas and catalyses growth in all corners of the country.

A National Wealth Taskforce Chaired by the Green Finance Institute and including former Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, Barclays CEO, Aviva's CEO and large institutional investors have been advising the Labour party on how to structure and implement the NWF and recently published an interim report setting out their recommendations to government. (A link to the report is available on the [NWF taskforce website](#)).

Details, opportunities and potential implications for Norfolk are not yet known. The government says further details are due to be set out ahead of an international investment summit later this year and that they plan to establish the NWF formally in UK law.

Plans to accelerate housing and infrastructure

In a speech to business leaders the new Chancellor Rachel Reeves outlined the government's first steps to drive sustained economic growth. These include key government actions relating to planning, housing and nationally significant critical infrastructure, including funding for 300 council planning officers, taking urgent steps to build 1.5 million homes over the next five years, and the immediate removal of the "de facto ban" on onshore wind as part of the government's clean energy mission.

There will be an economic growth focus to planning and the economic benefits of development will be a key consideration for government to help ensure that they unlock major schemes from clean energy projects and transport infrastructure to film studios and art-entertainment venues. Ministers would also take on decision-making for onshore wind projects and review applications that would boost 'regional and national' economies.

Further announcements are expected in the coming weeks including the launch of a consultation on an updated, growth-focused National Planning Policy Framework to include mandatory housing targets. Priority will be given to use of brownfield and 'grey belt' land for development but there will be a requirement to review green belt boundaries where necessary.

In response to the announcement, the Local Government Association and the County Council Network (CCN) pointed out that councils are not the barriers to housebuilding and that any targets would need to take account of local circumstances. The CCN's response said that with housing delivery lower in urban areas, housing targets should not be overwhelmingly allocated, or re-allocated, to county and rural areas. They also said that whilst they welcome full local plan coverage across the country, strategic planning across county areas would allow them to make more effective decisions about the best locations for housing and the infrastructure required to support it.

Government department change of name

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) has been renamed by the new labour government as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The department has previously (between 2018 and 2021) been named the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Former prime minister Boris Johnson changed it to DLUHC as part of his government's agenda.