

NCC Update

Government announce that it supports three unitary councils for Norfolk

The Government announced this week that it supports three unitary councils for Norfolk.

Cllr Kay Mason Billig, Leader of Norfolk County Council, said:

"I was briefed this morning by the minister, Alison McGovern, confirming the government's decision that it is minded to support 3 new councils for Norfolk. We await the details of the rationale behind this decision and will carefully consider this against the criteria the government set out for reorganisation. We must examine what this decision means for our residents, partners and services.

"We are clear that the Government must ensure that the full costs of reorganisation are met and that implementation arrangements are robust, realistic and fully deliverable. It is not acceptable to push these costs onto local councils and taxpayers.

"Our concern is that essential local services are protected and that any new arrangements provide stability and long-term sustainability for our communities.

"Our priority remains safeguarding frontline services and ensuring continuity for the people of Norfolk."

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service – new partnership

Norfolk residents will benefit from faster response times and greater resilience during peak demand through a new partnership between the Norfolk, Suffolk and Hertfordshire fire and rescue service control rooms and Motorola Solutions.

The Motorola Solutions Guardian Hub will enable the three counties to jointly handle emergency calls, dispatch crews and coordinate incidents, in the first formal partnership of its kind between three UK fire control rooms.

Most emergency calls will still be answered by Norfolk control room staff, but calls can be seamlessly diverted to Suffolk or Hertfordshire when demand is high, with Norfolk providing the same mutual aid in return.

National Update

Neighbourhood health framework

The Government has published a [Neighbourhood Health Framework](#) to support a new neighbourhood health service, building on recent NHS and local government pilots. It emphasises joint working between the NHS, councils and partners to combine the NHS's responsibility for health services with local authorities' responsibility for adult and children's social care services and public health. The aim is to shift care from hospital to community and focus more on prevention.

The framework also sets out the first targets for neighbourhood health. The Government says that over the next few months DHSC and NHS England will set the baselines that Integrated Care Boards will need to proceed with the new arrangements.

Call for public views to reform disability benefit for millions

Disabled people and those with long-term health conditions can share their views on how Personal Independent Payments (PIP) should be reformed, as the [Timms Review opens a Call for Evidence](#) this week. Topics being explored include:

- How effectively PIP is delivering on its intended purpose
- Whether the PIP assessment provides fair access to the right support
- Whether the experience of claiming PIP varies for different groups
- How the changes in the workplace and wider society since 2013 have impacted PIP

Anyone can respond and those with lived or learned experience of PIP, including disabled people, the organisations that represent them, carers, clinicians, experts, MPs, and other elected officials across the UK, are particularly encouraged to do so.

The online form for responses is available [here](#). The closing date is 28 May 2026.

County Councils Network (CCN) response to the National Planning Framework

The CCN has [published its consultation response](#) to the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), warning that the reforms would weaken local communities' voice and increase the risk of speculative, unsustainable development in rural areas.

CCN says the proposals would centralise decision-making by moving to a nationally set, 'one size fits all' framework that can override local policies making it harder for local councils to resist development except in exceptional circumstances.

It adds that mandatory housing targets introduced last year mean county areas face, on average, a 56% increase in delivery - 64,000 homes a year (around 1,245 a week) - over seven times the increase for councils in England's major cities.

Land use framework

The Government has published a new [land use framework](#) to guide how land is used across England, balancing farmland and nature with pressures such as housing and industry. It has three parts:

- A vision for England's future landscapes, informed by land-use change analysis
- Principles to guide land-use decision-making
- Actions to support land-use change, delivered with partners

The framework commits to maintaining overall food production in England, and to support food security and economic growth. It also sets out how the Government will protect the most productive land and give farmers (owners and tenants) greater rights, data and certainty to invest.

The full framework is available [here](#)

Devolution Bill update

The Government has announced [new amendments](#) to the English Devolution and Community empowerment Bill that they say, if voted through, will create safer streets, champion culture, and strengthen local accountability. The proposed amendments include:

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- New Local Scrutiny Committees to strengthen accountability and oversight of strategic authorities and regional mayors, as part of a push to strengthen accountability in devolved areas.
- Regional Mayors to have new responsibilities to promote arts, culture and heritage.
- Stronger enforcement powers for councils including tackling dangerous pavement parking and improving taxi/PHV licence standards.
- The Community Right to Buy period doubling to 10 years, giving communities longer to save valued local assets.

CLLR Michael Dalby

Michael.dalby.cllr@Norfolk.gov.uk