

November 2024 Priory Parish Council Report

Please find attached my report for November 2024

As always if you believe I can be of help or assistance as your District Councillor please do get in touch.

Email – sarah.butikofer@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Tel 07968 897235

Sarah

District Council General

25/26 Budget

In creating this budget, our priority has been to maintain the high quality of services that our residents rely on, while also being fiscally responsible. Despite the economic uncertainties that Councils up and down the nation have faced, we have balanced the budget for the upcoming year.

For district councils like North Norfolk, the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26, announced on 18 December 2024, was deeply disappointing. The Labour Government's Budget set out an additional £1.3 billion for local authority services, creating the expectation that all councils would see a 3.2% increase in core spending power.

In addition to this, two key funding streams—the Rural Services Delivery Grant and the previous Recovery Grant—have been abolished. In 2024/25, NNDC received £680,000 from these grants, but under the new scheme, rural councils like ours have lost out, receiving a lower share of redistributed funds.

However, despite the Government championing the importance of local government, they have significantly altered how this funding was distributed, prioritising metropolitan areas over shire districts. Which leads me to believe that Government simply does not understand rural communities like ours.

While the overall increase in core spending power across England was 6%, district councils received an average increase of just 0.32%. The Government allocated an additional £121 million in 'floor funding' to prevent

district councils from facing direct funding cuts. NNDC was allocated £805,000 simply to maintain its funding at the same level as last year; without this, we would have faced a direct reduction of that amount.

Since we set our budget, we have received a further reduction of £74,000 in our final settlement, meaning our total funding increase sits at 0%. This continued squeeze on district council funding has been an ongoing trend since 2010, with shire districts experiencing some of the deepest cuts in local government. Even with careful financial planning, district councils are being left with limited options to maintain services.

The Local Government Finance Settlement assumes that district councils will apply the maximum council tax increase before a referendum is required—3% or £5 for a Band D property. This budget proposes an increase of £4.95 for a Band D property—equivalent to less than 10p per week.

However, it is important to remember that from every £1 of council tax we collect, only 8p stays with North Norfolk District Council. The majority—75p—goes to Norfolk County Council, 14p is allocated to the Norfolk Police Authority, and the remaining 3p goes to Town and Parish Councils.

Despite the financial challenges we face, this budget commits over £2.5 million in further capital investment across our district:

- £514,000 towards Our Greener Future, by investing in the decarbonisation of Fakenham Sports Centre.
- £100,000 towards Developing Our Communities, including the renovation of the Itteringham Shop Roof and further improvements at Holt Country Park.
- £1.4 million towards Meeting Our Housing Needs, through the purchase of additional temporary accommodation.

- £410,000 towards Investing in Our Local Economy and Infrastructure, including improvements to the Marrams Pathway, Sunken Gardens, and Weybourne Car Park.

Since 2019, we have committed over £145 million to capital projects across North Norfolk. In the last 12 months, we have continued to invest in our district, delivering key projects that reflect our priorities.

We have installed solar photovoltaic panels at Victory Leisure Centre, commenced work on the Cromer and Mundesley Coastal Protection Schemes, and continued the nationally significant Coastwise project—demonstrating our firm commitment to Our Greener Future.

Work has begun on the much-needed backstage refurbishment of the Cromer Pier Pavilion Theatre, alongside the completion of essential structural repairs to the Grade II listed pier. The new staff facilities at Holt Country Park have been completed, and later this month, we will proudly open brand-new public conveniences and a Changing Places facility in Holt. Sheringham will see the addition of a new play park this year, and we look forward to the upcoming work on the Fakenham Leisure and Sports Hub—all reinforcing our commitment to Developing Our Communities.

This year also saw the long-awaited commencement of the Fakenham Roundabout, a significant infrastructure project that I know local members are particularly pleased to see progressing. Our sustainable growth teams have played a key role in supporting North Norfolk's economy through the delivery of both the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund—underlining our commitment to Investing in Our Local Economy and Infrastructure.

This year we have seen an addition of 2 properties to our temporary accommodation portfolio, bring this up to 25 properties in total—strengthening our commitment to Meeting Our Housing Needs.

The shortage of government funding for temporary accommodation is one of our most pressing financial challenges. By the end of this financial year, we anticipate a shortfall of £725,000 in temporary accommodation funding, and this likely to persist in the next fiscal year. In response, we have allocated £1,300,00 in this budget to support those in our district facing homelessness. This is a crisis affecting councils nationwide.

Second Homes Council Tax Premium and Housing Fund

It is because of these pressures that this council has introduced the 100% second homes premium for this financial year.

However, North Norfolk District Council's share of the premium—8%, equating to approximately £515,000—will be placed in a reserve named the Second Homes Premium Reserve. This reserve will be used to ease budget pressures, particularly in covering any shortfall in temporary accommodation costs.

We have also successfully negotiated a 25% share of the County Council's second homes premium, estimated to bring in an additional £1.7 million. This means that the capital investment we have pledged will not need to be funded through borrowing—saving the council and the taxpayer £2.4 million in interest repayments.

We have also been successful in our next bid to the Local Authority Housing Fund, and will receive an additional £588,000, which will be invested in temporary accommodation.

Budget 24/25

Not only have we avoided a deficit, but we are now expecting to end the year with a small surplus of £48,000. This diligent financial management has protected our reserves and ensured that we remain in a strong position going forward.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

In addition, the ongoing discussions around devolution and potential Local Government Reorganisation add further uncertainty to our future. The government's stance on devolution presents both challenges and opportunities for North Norfolk. While greater local powers could allow us to shape services to better meet our communities' needs, the reality is that rural areas like ours risk being overlooked in larger combined authorities. Any future proposals for local government reorganisation must be led by evidence and rooted in what works best for our residents, not dictated by financial pressures alone. We will continue to advocate for a model that protects and strengthens North Norfolk's ability to deliver for its people.

Councils across Norfolk will meet individually to discuss a collaborative submission to Government in March.

In addition a consultation into the proposals has been launched by Government, this is open to all to complete.

[Norfolk and Suffolk devolution - GOV.UK](#)

Local Plan

The Local Plan Inspector will shortly be visiting to review sites submitted in the updated plan.

NOTICE OF RESUMED INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION HEARINGS UNDER REGULATION 24 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (LOCAL PLANNING) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2012

North Norfolk District Council submitted its proposed Local Plan for independent Examination in May 2023. The Secretary of State appointed Mr David Reed BSc DipTP DMS to undertake an independent examination as to the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan and to issue a report with his conclusions. Initial public hearing sessions took place from January to March 2024, following which the Inspector published his initial findings, detailing a number of matters which required further work and public consultation.

A Further Consultation on proposed changes to the Local Plan took place for a six-week period during November and December 2024. Following the Further Consultation, the Inspector requires further hearing sessions to take place to enable discussion on the identified matters. Any matters covered during the initial hearings in January to March 2024 will not be revisited unless directly affected by the new proposals set out in the Further Consultation.

Date and time of hearings

As part of the ongoing examination process, further hearings sessions will be held as follows:

- Tuesday 8 April (Matter A - Additional Housing Sites)
- Wednesday 9 April (Matter A continued)
- Thursday 10 April (Matter B - Small Growth Villages; Matter C - Misc Questions)

The hearing sessions will commence on Tuesday 8 April 2025 at 10:00am and shall be chaired by Mr David Reed BSc DipTP DMS on behalf of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). All subsequent sessions will commence at 9:30am (morning) and 1:30pm (afternoon) unless detailed otherwise on the North Norfolk District Council website.

Place

Committee Room, North Norfolk Council Offices, Holt Road, Cromer NR27 9EN.

Attendance

The hearing sessions can be attended by interested members of the public who wish to observe proceedings. Participation at the hearings is managed by the Programme Officer by prior arrangement. Only those who made representations during the Further Consultation period are entitled to speak, however there is no requirement to do so as the written representations already submitted will be taken fully into account.

Duplication and repetition will not be permitted, so those wishing to make similar points should appoint a spokesperson or seek to input into the views of a representative body such as a town or parish council (where these are appearing).

Availability of documents

The programme for the further hearings (subject to change), the inspectors matters and issues for discussion, accompanying letter/guidance, this notice, and the entire suite of Examination Library documents can be viewed in section 1 of the examination library, at: www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/localplanexamination

The examination documents are available for inspection at North Norfolk District Council, Holt Road, Cromer, NR27 9EN during normal office opening hours. Prior notice should be given by email to planning.policy@north-norfolk.gov.uk or 01263 516318 in order that the relevant documents can be made available to you at an agreed time.

Further information

Additional information about the examination including latest news, can be viewed at: www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/localplanexamination

An independent Programme Officer, Mrs Annette Feeney, was appointed to administer the examination, including organisation of the public hearing sessions, and dealing with procedural matters. The Programme Officer is independent from North Norfolk District Council and reports to the appointed inspector.

All procedural queries or other matters relating to the North Norfolk Local Plan Examination (including appearing at the examination hearings) should be sent to the Programme Officer using the details available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/localplanexamination