

Stoke Holy Cross - District and County Councillors Report 1st October 2026

Member Ward Grants

Requests for support with small projects (typically up to £1,000 per project) to benefit the local community can be made to your District Councillors. Please note funding for 2026/27 is largely allocated.

In Bloom Grant

Applications for In Bloom Grants are open to Parish Councils and other community organisations until 15th November 2026. The grant is limited to £1 per resident and must be matched funded.

Nature Conservation Fund

Applications can be made for grants of up to £10,000 for projects which support nature recovery and improve or help connect residents to accessible greenspaces. The scheme is open to Town and Parish Councils, community groups, charities and schools in South Norfolk. Applications close on Friday 16th September. <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/environment/nature-conservation-fund>

Common Ground Award - community grant funding

Community and voluntary organisations can apply for grants to improve local places and help bring people together. The Common Ground Award 2026 to 2027 will fund buildings, facilities, equipment and other long-term improvements for eligible voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in England. Individual organisations can apply for between £20,000 and £50,000. In exceptional cases, applications of up to £100,000 may be considered where there is strong evidence of need and likely benefit. Groups of organisations applying together can seek between £100,000 and £250,000.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-ground-award-prospectus/common-ground-award-prospectus>

Community & Open Spaces Grant

Up to £2.25 million of funding is available to support larger projects valued at over £200,000 which are led by Parish and Town Councils but support South Norfolk Council's strategic ambitions and wider place shaping ambitions.

Planning Committees -National Scheme of Delegated Authorities

New legislation takes effect from 31 October 2026, limiting the type of planning decision which can be taken by local planning committees. It affects both County and South Norfolk Councils. All Schedule 1 applications (less than 10 houses, commercial floorspace of less than 1,000m² or sites less 1 ha) must be determined by a planning officer. Larger applications will be referred to Committee if they meet a Gateway test which will include an assessment of whether the application raises economic, social or environmental considerations. Councillors have flexibility to set higher a higher Gateway test than the minimum defined in the legislation.

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Safe Recycling of Batteries

The County Council is urging all residents to ensure all batteries are safely recycled to avoid the risk of fires at waste collection and recycling centres. Fires due to batteries have been increasing for a number of years, and 2026 is expected to be the worst on record.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.norfolkrecycles.com/article/75867/Electrical-items-and-battery-recycling>

Local Government Reform and Local Elections

The Government has announced it is withdrawing its decision to move to 3 Unitary Authorities in Norfolk, pending a further review to ensure the Government “gets it right”. The detailed comments from Angela Rayner indicate that the Government remains committed to the principle of rapid devolution, apparently to be implemented in 2028. The Government also appears committed to LGR and moving to single unitary authorities and away from the current County/District Council structure in Counties like Norfolk and Suffolk. The timescales for this and the shape of LGR across East Anglia remains unclear.

The Government confirmed that elections to South Norfolk District Council will go ahead in May 2027. Previously these were to have been cancelled, pending the disillusion of the Council in 2028.

NCC Budget Setting

The NCC Budget Setting process is underway, and a number of initiatives have been identified to fund the budget gap for 2027/28. Some of these will require public consultation such as reducing the number of hazardous waste days at recycling centres, reducing highways maintenance, weed control and gritting and seeking additional contributions from parents for post-16 home to school transport costs. After identified initiatives, a gap of over £6million remains unresolved.

Fridge Mountain

There is a national shortage of facilities that can recycle fridges in the UK. At present, fridges and freezers can be accepted at major local recycling facilities, but most are being stored by the County Council pending resolution of the national situation. This has led to reports of a “fridge mountain” at a former recycling centre near Coltishall.

Large Solar Farms

George Freeman, MP chaired Norfolk’s First Solar Summit on Friday 4th September. I joined a cross-party Group of MPs, Councillors, Town and Parish Councillors to discuss the “wall of solar farms” facing Norfolk and the need for people across the county to work together to limit the cumulative impact of these developments (including the related development of battery storage units and other infrastructure) on the County. Further events are expected.

Apex Data Centre

Apex has indicated that the planning application for this controversial data centre is expected to be submitted this year. A petition against the data centre now has over 14,000 signatures.

[Link to Petition](#)

Recycling Centre Consultation

Norfolk County Council's annual Recycling Centre Survey is now open until 18 October 2026. It seeks views from both users and non-users to inform future improvements to the service. Responses from people who do not currently use a Recycling Centre are particularly valuable, as they can help the council understand barriers, unmet needs and opportunities to make the service more accessible.

www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/RecyclingCentres2026/

NCC Chief Executive

Dennis Bacon has started work as the new Chief Executive of the County Council. Mr Bacon is a local businessman with experience in the care and hospitality sectors and a specialism in culture change. His experience set does not include senior management experience in a large business or in local government.

Police & Crime Commissioner Annual Budget Consultation

The new PCC is consulting before setting a budget for 2027/28. The proposed priorities are:

- Re-engaging with neighbourhoods to rebuild trust in policing
- Preventing violence, abuse and exploitation
- Safer rural communities

The consultation can be found at: [Link to PCC Consultation](#)

Standing Up for Norfolk 2026-28

The County Council has published a new strategic plan with the following 5 high level priorities:

- Putting Norfolk's Residents First
- Growing Norfolk's Economy
- Keeping Norfolk Moving
- Running an Efficient & Effective Council
- Building Stronger Norfolk Communities and Place

The differences to the previous strategic plan are perhaps more in presentation and focus than content.

The previous focus on a "Greener Future" appears to be much reduced.

Streetlight Turn Off

The County Council is trialling a streetlight turn in certain areas as part of the Council's cost saving measures. Locally, a trial for a minimum period of one year has started on the A140 between the Hempnall roundabout and Church Lane, Newton Flotman. Note that "no streetlights will be permanently decommissioned until a final decision has been made based on the evidence gathered during the trial".

Draft Environment Delivery Plan for Norfolk

The Government has announced a draft Environmental Delivery Plan (EDP) that could unlock up to 15,780 new homes in Norfolk and fund improvements to rivers, wetlands and wildlife habitats. Natural England drafted the plan under the Nature Restoration Fund. The government says that the Norfolk EDP will be the first test of their approach to winning public consent for housebuilding, and that the EDP has been developed with local authorities and partners to reflect local environmental priorities. It covers the River Wensum, Bure Broads and Marshes, and Yare Broads and Marshes catchments across much of central and eastern Norfolk. Most of Stoke Holy Cross falls within the Nutrient Neutrality area and this seems to have limited new applications for housing.

The EDP is open for consultation until 27 October 2026: <https://consultations.defra.gov.uk/consultation-on-a-new-environmental-delivery-plan>

East Pye Solar Farm.

This NSIP application is in the 6-month examination period. Public hearings have been held over 3 days at Dunston Hall. Written representations must be submitted by 6th October.

The Dunston Hall hearings were recorded and can be watched via the NSIP website:

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110014?lang=en>

‘Norwich to Tilbury’ Update

The Planning Inspectorate’s Inspection of the Norwich Tilbury Pylon proposal closed on 10 August 2026.

The PI’s recommendations to the Secretary of State should be completed within 3 months (ie mid-

November). PylonsEastAnglia are continuing to campaign against the pylon proposals and are fundraising.

For further information visit: <https://pylonseastanglia.co.uk/actions> .

Bob McClenning, Ian Spratt & Jim Webber (County Councillor)

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