

## LONGHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.00pm on Monday 18th May 2026 in the Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Susan Douglas (Chairman), D/Cllr Richard Duffield and seven members of the public.

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence.**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from D/Cllr Roger Atterwill and Cllr Paul O'Brien.

**2. To confirm the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 were approved.

**3. To receive reports from:**

**a) The Parish Council Chairman.**

The Chairman presented her report which is attached.

**b) Village Hall Committee.**

The Chairman presented the Village Hall report which is attached.

**c) St Andrews & St Peters Church.**

The Chairman presented the Church report which is attached.

**d) The Hastings Charity Land.**

In the absence of Cllr Donna McLeod, there was no report.

**e) The Parish Council Clay Pit Project.**

The Chairman presented the Clay Pit report which is attached.

**f) District & County Councillors.**

The Chairman presented the District and County reports which are attached.

**4. Open Forum – an opportunity for residents of the parish to express their views on matters of interest or concern relating to the village and to suggest ideas for the future.**

A member of the public raised the condition of the Bittering Road, which is like a farm track, wet and muddy on occasions with a crumbling road surface. The Chairman said that Council is aware of the problem and will continue to chase up Highways for action.

A request to have the hedge cut back on Honeypot Road, as you turn left onto it from the Wendling Road will be actioned. The road signs are also obscured.

A request for SLOW signs at the corner near the Old Rectory on Honeypot Road will also be submitted to Highways. The speed and lack of consideration for other road users by HGVs is an issue along this road.

The lack of any community events was then discussed, with the suggestion that the pub holds more. A member of the public suggested that the village needs more life, with opportunities to meet people and that they be well advertised.

The Chairman said that the Village Hall holds regular events, including a monthly coffee morning but people don't want to volunteer, or attend local events. The events that are held are advertised on notice boards, in the Village Hall, and the village magazine so everyone should be aware.

It was pointed out that everyone's experience is different and a recent new resident had wanted to help and join in and had made a point of getting in touch and volunteering; she is now a member of the Parish Council and hoped to make a difference.

D/Cllr Duffield said he had watched the village over the years and seen first hand the various events which had been held and the difficulties in getting both enough volunteers and people to attend. Similar problems were experienced in neighbouring villages, which are now mostly made up of older people with younger people wanted to be in or near towns.

The Chairman said that if things did not improve there was a real danger that in the future the Village Hall may have to close.

It was suggested that the members of the public attend the Village Hall Committee AGM being held on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June in the Village Hall. That will be a more appropriate meeting to take new events/volunteering opportunities forward.

A member of the public invited all village residents to help clean the church and attend the service for her two daughter's weddings which will be taking place in Longham Church, by special permission of the Archdeacon. They were aware the Church is closed and thought it would be an opportunity for residents to attend the local church.

**5. To note the date of the next Annual Parish Meeting – Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2027.**

The date of the next meeting was noted and the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.53pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Longham Parish Council**

### **Chairmans Report 2026**

#### **Unitary Change**

The government have decided that instead of District and County Council, to have unitary authorities instead. They have opted to replace current arrangements with three new unitary authorities, West, East and Greater Norwich.

After May 2028, the areas of Breckland Council and the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, plus a small number of parishes from South Norfolk, will make up the new authority for West Norfolk.

This is a big change for everyone, the unitary authority is effectively a one stop shop for all the council services and it is possible that Parish Council will have to take on more responsibilities in the future.

#### **Planning**

There has been no decision as yet, regarding the application at Dykewood farm for the proposed construction of ground mounted solar panel arrays and associated infrastructure.

The new Local Plan is still ongoing but unfortunately the two pieces of land put forward by the Parish Council were not included.

#### **Highway Matters**

The Highways team are looking at installing better signage at the church crossroads, as there were two accidents there last year.

District Council Mark Kiddle Morris has asked that the gritting route for Longham next year, also include Hoe Road and to extend the route along the road to the McLeod quarry entrance.

#### **Playing Field and Play Area.**

Cllr O'Brien reported that regular checks continue and all is currently in good order, with the exception of the Basketball board and net which needs a tidy-up. Cllr O'Brien will obtain a quote for a coat of paint and replacement net.

#### **Clay Pits (a county wildlife site).**

Cllr O'Brien reported that a member of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust would be visiting the site to look at the pond to assess it, give advice and assist with funding to make the site accessible to members of the public. A new fund has opened for grants over £10,000 and an application will be submitted. Cllr O'Brien has applied for a grant to enable easier access to the site for the public as well as an information board and viewing platform for those not able to negotiate the stairs.

### **Village Defibrillator.**

Cllr O'Brien reported that regular checks continue and the pads have been changed.

### **Community Resilience – Emergency & Civil Contingencies**

Parish Council's were asked to draw up a Community Resilience Plan, in case of emergencies. Cllr Mitton took on this task and has drawn up a plan with volunteers, offering such services as medical assistance, power supplies, transport, the village hall will be used as a meeting point etc.

Cllr Mitton reported that the plan is now complete, with additional volunteers having come forward; the details are published on the Parish Council website. She also reported that Breckland advice was to advise anyone assisting in an emergency that they must make sure they are covered in respect of public liability insurance.

The Parish Council were pleased to welcome Paula Verden as a new Parish Councillor, this year. I would also like to thank our County, District and Parish Councillors, for all their help and support over the last year. Also our Clerk who keeps us up to date and in check

## Longham Village Hall report 2026

This year we have concentrated on getting the fire equipment up to standard, we have installed in fire extinguishers, new signs and fire alarms. Although it cost quite a lot of money I am pleased to say we meet all the fire safety regulations.

We are working hard to get more bookings for the hall, and we are also putting on more fund raising events, which will give us more income.

Some of the committee have decorated the first room in the old school house, ready to use as a children's book shop, where we are selling second hand books and arranging a story time for youngsters. This also means that we have been able to reduce the cost of insuring the hall and house.

We have also replaced the front door of the cottage, as the old one was broken and unsafe, we paid for the materials and Paul kindly fitted the door for free.

Sadly despite everyone's enthusiasm for the school house, we have received very little money towards the cost of repairs. The committee are looking at using the house as a community and wellness space, plans are being drawn up but grants will have to be got to carry out the work.

The committee would like to thank the Parish Council for the grant towards the cost of the grass cutting, this year it is costing £185 per cut.

## **St Andrews Longham**

Sadly St Andrews is no longer in used as a church, however the church yard is still active. Last year there were two burials, Margaret Dye and the Rev Vivian Singh.

The PCC are grateful to the Parish Council for paying for the grass cutting in the churchyard.

## **Clay Pits Report May 25/May 26**

Over the last year we have continued with the maintenance of the Clay Pits. This includes regular clearances of growth in the ponds and surrounding areas, including pathways. This work is carried out 3/4 times over the year by volunteers from Norfolk TCV, supervised by a paid officer Mark Webster.

Public access to the ponds is still not encouraged as overall the site is not safe enough, but we are working towards this.

We have engaged with Norfolk Wildlife Trust to assess the condition of the site and look at future developments. An officer of the Trust, Aaron Brown, who is the County Wildlife Sites Adviser, has visited the site twice to carry out condition and wildlife surveys. He reports that the site is on good condition, and notes the efforts that have been made to get the site to this point. He notes that it forms a 'valuable mosaic of ponds, grasslands and scrub'. He suggests excavating an area close to Pond 1 ( the largest ) so that it holds water for longer. On his second visit, he noted the presence of breeding Great Crested Newts, Smooth Newts, and Caddis Fly Larvae.

On 14th April the TCV team worked on clearing and maintenance on the site, including adding new gravel to the paths alongside the main pond. Thanks to Donna and Roddy McCleod for supplying the gravel.

An application for grant funding has been made to the Anglian Water Community Funding in respect of further work on the Clay Pits. Norfolk Wildlife Trust signposted us to this fund, and have said they will support the application. This will be a long and complicated process, and I will keep the Parish Council informed of progress.

Finally, I must thank the Parish Council for its continued financial support for works on the Clay Pits.

Paul O'Brien

## Norfolk County Council – Annual Parish Report 2025-26

<b>Our Promises</b>	<b>What Was Delivered</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Libraries &amp; Culture</b>	Built new libraries, invested <b>£3m+</b> , and transformed <b>Norwich Castle</b> into a worldclass attraction	Stronger cultural offer and a major boost for tourism
<b>Better Care</b>	Invested <b>£40m+</b> in care homes and supported living	More residents able to live independently for longer
<b>Backing Our Children</b>	<b>GOOD</b> rated services, <b>£2.5m+</b> for care leavers, <b>£5m</b> for jobs, and <b>600+</b> opportunities created	Better life chances and stronger futures for young people
<b>Better Roads</b>	Major infrastructure projects completed and <b>£10m</b> extra invested in maintenance	One of the <b>bestperforming highways services</b> in the country
<b>Improved Buses</b>	<b>£50m+</b> invested, more electric buses, and <b>26% growth in passenger numbers</b>	Cleaner travel and better public transport access
<b>Protecting the Environment</b>	<b>850,000+</b> trees planted and emissions cut by <b>50%</b>	Protecting Norfolk's countryside and tackling climate change
<b>Growing the Economy</b>	Investment in high streets, improved connectivity, and <b>hundreds of new homes built</b>	Stronger local economy and thriving communities

Norfolk County Council, under a Conservative administration, has a strong record of delivering on its promises and investing in the county's future. From new libraries and major road schemes to over £40 million in care and significant improvements in children's services, we have focused on the priorities that matter most to residents. We have strengthened local transport, supported businesses and high streets, expanded opportunities for young people, and taken meaningful action to protect Norfolk's environment. This is a council that combines experience with action backing communities, improving services, and driving sustainable growth, while continuing to stand up for Norfolk and secure the investment it deserves.

## **Norfolk County Council delivers a balanced and responsible budget for 2026–27**

Norfolk County Council approved a balanced £613.8m budget for 2026–27, demonstrating strong financial leadership and prudent management in what remains one of the toughest funding climates in decades.

The administration has once again delivered stability and certainty for residents, setting a balanced financial position while identifying £42.3 million in savings and efficiencies and committing £76.3 million in targeted investment to protect vital services and strengthen Norfolk's economy.

Despite significant national financial pressures and ongoing constraints in central government funding, we have ensured the county remains on a firm financial footing, without resorting to emergency measures. This stands in stark contrast to a growing number of upper-tier authorities across the country that have issued Section 114 notices or are facing effective bankruptcy.

The budget enables the council to continue:

- Protecting frontline services
- Investing heavily in adults and children's services
- Delivering new libraries and modern learning hubs in key towns
- Supporting for heritage, culture, and tourism
- Driving transformative reforms to improve efficiency and outcomes
- Backing economic growth and infrastructure
- Maintaining long-term financial sustainability

In line with national funding assumptions a 4.998% increase in council tax was implemented due to the government's continued reliance on placing the burden on local taxpayers to safeguard core services. This decision reflects the financial realities facing councils nationwide, while ensuring essential services remain protected for Norfolk residents.

This budget reinforces Norfolk's Conservative administration's commitment to careful stewardship of taxpayers' money, strong local services, and a resilient future for the county.

## **Norfolk County Council invests in community led highway improvements across the county**

Norfolk County Council has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting local communities with

the approval of 99 new highway improvement schemes for 2026-27, delivered in partnership with town and parish councils across Norfolk.

Papers highlight how the Parish Partnership Programme, now entering its fifteenth year, gave local communities a voice in shaping the highways enhancements that matter most to them, whether that's improving pedestrian safety, slowing vehicle speeds, or making it easier to walk, cycle or access local services.

This year's programme represented a total investment of £769,034, made possible through the longstanding 50/50 funding model. Town and parish councils will collectively contribute £384,517, matched by £384,517 from Norfolk County Council, enabling more than twice as many small-scale schemes to be delivered than could be funded by the council alone.

In total local councils submitted 99 bids for 2026/27 and all were approved as viable schemes after being carefully assessed against value for money, community outcomes, safety benefits and compliance.

### **Norfolk's bus service improvements deliver record growth and faster journeys**

Norfolk County Council's ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has transformed public transport across the county, driving a 26% increase in passenger numbers since 2022 and making Norfolk a leading national example for sustainable travel.

A paper discussed at the council's Infrastructure and Development Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> January highlighted what has been delivered thanks to the £65.45 million secured for Norfolk from the Department for Transport. That includes;

- New and enhanced bus services on more than 44 routes across Norfolk, including more evening and Sunday services
- Affordable fares: capped single fares in key towns and multi-operator ticketing
- Greener fleet: 75 zero-emission buses in Norwich and 24 more electric buses coming in 2026
- Improved passenger experience: real-time information, safer waiting areas, next-stop announcements and real-time information on more buses.

Not only are we seeing record-setting and increasing numbers of passengers, but customer satisfaction has also risen to 87%, bucking national trends and reinforcing Norfolk's approach to improvements in bus travel across the county.

### **Norfolk gritting vehicles headed out over the winter season**

Norfolk County Council's winter gritting got underway during the recent winter, with gritters active on A/B roads, key bus routes, and village access roads, using new tech for efficiency.

The first runs of the recent winter season (late 2025/early 2026) started as temperatures dropped, utilizing the 58-strong fleet with automated salting to cover 2,200 miles of routes, supported by stocked salt barns and public grit bins.

### **Norfolk County Council took first place in the Eastern region in annual Highways and Transport Satisfaction Survey**

Norfolk County Council has once again demonstrated strong performance in the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey, taking the top spot in the Eastern region for overall satisfaction and second out of 29 county councils across England.

The annual survey, which gathers public views on highways and transport services, saw Norfolk achieve an overall satisfaction score of 48%, well above the national average of 40%.

This marks the 15th consecutive year Norfolk has participated in the survey, and the 7th year in a row that we have come either first or second overall.

Key highlights from this year's results include:

- Top Regional Performer: Norfolk ranked 1st in the Eastern Region for overall satisfaction.
- Some of the best above average scores were in our bus services thanks to improvements that have been made as part of our Bus Service Improvement Plan. The 'local bus services' overall category we were 10% above the group average with sub indicators as follows:
  - Public Transport Information (11% above group average)
  - Frequency of bus services (9% above group average)
  - Ease of access to school / work (6% above group average)
- Condition of highways (8% above group average)

### **Norfolk County Council's Deep Disappointment at Government Decision to Halt Mayoral Election and Slash Devolution Funding**

Norfolk County Council expressed serious concern following the Labour Government's announcement that the planned 2026 mayoral election for the Norfolk & Suffolk Combined County Authority will be deferred until 2028. The sudden decision meant that Norfolk would now receive only around one-third of the investment previously promised under the

devolution programme.

### **Norfolk County Councils astonishment at the Minded To decision of the government to create 3 Unitaries for Norfolk under Local Government Reorganisation**

Norfolk County Council made a robust bid for a Single Unitary council for Norfolk under the proposals for LGR. This bid was based on sound financial information with the primary purpose of protecting front line services, whilst ensuring value for money. NCC already deliver 85% of local services in Norfolk, a single unitary was the easiest to implement, would ultimately save money for taxpayers and was the most obvious choice for the county. It was also backed by key stakeholders like the NHS and the Police. None of the other proposals, which would split services and cost more to implement and run, stacked up. It is therefore disappointing that despite the 3 unitary proposal not meeting the government's own criteria, that this is the option chosen. This may be more a political decision than a practical one and seems irrational. The council will consider the details of the decision and may choose to challenge this.

### **Norwich Castle Keep reopens following £27m redevelopment**

Norwich Castle Keep reopened to visitors following a comprehensive five-year redevelopment project that introduced new accessibility features alongside new galleries and interpretive displays.

Funded by £12 million from Norfolk County Council and over £13 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, all five floors of the newly named People's Palace were opened to the public for the first time ever.

The Grade I listed castle, originally commissioned by William the Conqueror 900 years ago and completed by his son Henry I in 1121, retained its historic significance while embracing modern improvements.

A new light-filled atrium adjacent to the Keep was unveiled in the first phase of the redevelopment in July 2024. Visitors also benefited from a new café, gift shop, and additional toilet facilities to enhance the visitor experience.

Importantly, a lift was installed to provide full wheelchair accessibility throughout the Keep, allowing access from the basement all the way up to the battlements, where visitors could enjoy panoramic views across Norwich.

### **Nationally recognised 'AI programme to be rolled out across Norfolk to prevent falls**

A new, nationally recognised proactive intervention scheme is rolled out across the whole of

Norfolk. The initiative was delivered in collaboration with local partners including Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE), city, district and borough Councils and NHS organisations, aims to reduce falls in vulnerable and older adults.

Following a successful pilot with 1250 residents, the programme, which uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to identify residents at risk of escalating needs, enhances the safety and wellbeing of those at risk of falls. The latest Artificial Intelligence technology, natural language processing is used to 'read' case notes and automatically extract meaningful insight about our residents. This technology enables the council to identify and prioritise individuals in Norfolk most at risk of falling, allows for proactive intervention before they fall.

AI is a rapidly developing technology with the potential to improve the delivery of services. The council is using AI to benefit the people of Norfolk in a safe, ethical and transparent way.

Falls are a major concern, particularly among older or vulnerable adults, and can lead to severe injuries and a decline in quality of life. Through this programme, the council will be able to predict people who are at higher risk and offer timely and targeted interventions to support them.

For more information about preventing falls visit [Preventing and dealing with falls](#).

### **Norfolk County Council Approved £500k Community Fund to Boost Local Projects**

Norfolk County Council approved the launch of a new £500k Norfolk Community Fund for 2025/26, aimed at supporting grassroots projects that strengthen communities and improve local wellbeing.

The fund will empower local voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) groups to apply for grants between £200 and £2,500 to deliver small-scale initiatives that bring people together, promote inclusion, and enhance quality of life. Each of the county's 84 councillors will be allocated £5,000 to distribute within their divisions, ensuring funding reaches every corner of Norfolk