News from County Hall and Around the Loddon Division

November 2026 | Cllr Kay Mason Billig

Across Norfolk

Local Government Reorganisation – Norfolk still waiting for answers

The Government has confirmed that it intends to press ahead with local government reorganisation across England, with elections to the new unitary councils now planned for May 2028 and the new authorities expected to take over in April 2029.

However, we still do not know how many councils Norfolk will have.

The Government withdrew its previous decision to divide Norfolk into three unitary authorities and is now reconsidering the options. We are awaiting another decision on whether Norfolk will have one, two or three unitary councils.

Meanwhile, district council elections are expected to go ahead in May 2027, meaning candidates will be standing for councils which are due to be abolished just two years later.

I find this extraordinary. Norfolk did not ask for this reorganisation, yet we have spent more than two years preparing for changes that remain unsettled.

The uncertainty affects staff retention, recruitment, future investment and the ability of councils to plan effectively. There is also the question of how much public money has already been spent and how much the Government will reimburse.

Our councils should be concentrating on delivering services, not repeatedly reorganising themselves.

Norfolk deserves a clear decision and an end to this prolonged uncertainty.

Norfolk's Budget – Your Views Matter

Norfolk County Council is consulting on its budget for 2027/28.

The Council faces a projected £35.927 million funding gap, with 86 proposals intended to deliver approximately £32.273 million in savings and efficiencies.

Among the proposals are:

Reducing winter gritting routes by 5%.

Cutting revenue-funded highway maintenance by 5%.

Reducing verge cutting and weed treatment.

Reducing hazardous household waste disposal events.

A separate consultation is also planned on increasing parental contributions towards post-16 education transport.

I am particularly concerned about the impact of these proposals on rural communities.

Reducing gritting and highway maintenance could have significant consequences for villages where residents depend on narrow country roads for work, school and essential journeys.

The proposals are not final decisions. Residents and parish councils have until **7 December 2026** to respond.

I encourage everyone to take part through the County Council's website at **www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget**.

The Future of Norfolk's Care Homes

The future of the Norse Care homes remains uncertain following the decision not to proceed with the proposed sale to Stow Healthcare.

The previous proposals were intended to secure substantial investment in ageing care homes while protecting continuity of care for residents and employment arrangements for staff.

The Council is now considering alternatives, with the timetable extended into early 2027.

My concern is that delay carries financial consequences, while residents, families and staff are left wondering what happens next.

I will continue to seek answers about the costs of withdrawing from the previous arrangements and the alternative plans being developed.

Above all, the welfare of residents must remain the priority.

Recycling Centres – Docking Reprieve Welcomed

The proposal to close Docking Household Waste Recycling Centre has been withdrawn, which is welcome news for the communities affected.

However, the wider budget consultation includes proposals to reduce hazardous household waste disposal events.

I believe residents should have reasonable opportunities to dispose of difficult and potentially dangerous materials safely. Reducing these services must not create additional problems through inappropriate disposal or fly-tipping.

Speeding on Our Rural Roads

At the recent Police and Crime Panel meeting, I also raised concerns about speeding on our rural roads.

This is one of the issues residents contact me about most frequently. Speeding vehicles are particularly dangerous in villages with narrow roads, limited pavements and pedestrians walking close to passing traffic.

I have spoken to the Police and Crime Commissioner about the need for stronger enforcement. He has indicated that further initiatives are being developed to tackle speeding and associated antisocial behaviour.

I welcome that commitment, but we need to see practical results. Speed limits are there for a reason, and enforcement must be part of the solution.

I will continue to press for greater attention to speeding across our rural communities.

Around the Loddon Division

A New Police Base for Loddon – Very Welcome News

I am delighted to report that plans are progressing for a new police base at Loddon Fire Station.

This follows concerns I raised directly with the Chief Constable after a report on police response times identified the Loddon area as having the worst response times in Norfolk.

I wrote to the Chief Constable to express my concerns about the level of police cover for our rural communities. The Police and Crime Commissioner has since visited Loddon, and I am very pleased that plans are now being brought forward for a police base in the town.

I recently attended a meeting at the fire station and am fully supporting the planning application and the speedy installation of the new facility.

The police will be based alongside the fire service and Loddon First Responders, giving us representation from all three blue-light services at one location.

This is an important step towards improving the police presence in our area, although we will still need to see how the new arrangements affect response times and day-to-day policing.

Seething Lagoons – Another Planning Refusal

There is excellent news for residents of Seething, Mundham and surrounding villages.

On 30 October, Norfolk County Council refused the latest application by Whites Recycling Limited for the use of the lagoons at Upgate Road to store organic liquid waste.

The refusal followed objections from South Norfolk Council's Environmental Health Officer and Norfolk County Council's highways officer, relating to odour, residential amenity and highway impacts.

This is a campaign I have supported for several years.

In February 2022, I spoke against an earlier application at the County Council's Planning Committee, raising concerns about unpleasant odours, heavy vehicle movements and the impact on residents' quality of life.

That application was refused. A further application was refused in March 2025, and the latest refusal represents another important decision for the community.

I am delighted that residents' concerns have once again been recognised and want to thank everyone who has worked so persistently to make their voices heard.

I will continue to monitor the situation, including any appeal. I have also asked officers to now look at enforcement of the ongoing planning breaches.

Wherryman's Way – Protecting Our Riverside Footpaths

I have arranged to meet the County Council's public rights of way officers to discuss several concerning problems along Wherryman's Way.

Sections of this popular riverside route have recently been lost at Bramerton and Surlingham, and I want to understand what can be done to restore or replace the affected paths.

We will also be discussing the closure of the path across Hardley Flood, which has resulted in walkers being diverted onto the road.

Wherryman's Way is an important recreational route, valued by residents and visitors alike. We should be doing everything reasonably possible to protect access while recognising the challenges posed by erosion, flooding and changing river conditions.

I will report back following my meeting with officers.

Pyes Mill – Riverbank Repairs and Improved Access to the Water

Work continues at Pyes Mill following the riverbank slippage last year, which resulted in the closure of several moorings.

The site is an important recreational asset for Loddon, and I am pleased that work is progressing to address the damage and restore access to the affected areas.

We are also exploring the possibility of creating a **new river access point for kayaks** at Pyes Mill. This could provide a welcome improvement for people who enjoy using the river for recreation and make it easier and safer to launch smaller craft.

I will continue to follow progress on the riverbank works and report further as plans for the proposed kayak access develop.

Loddon Staithe – Seeking a Lasting Solution

Problems associated with boats overstaying at Loddon Staithe continue to cause concern.

Loddon Town Council is planning to install additional CCTV in the area to help discourage antisocial behaviour.

While this is a welcome measure, it is important that the relevant agencies work together to address the wider problems and establish a lasting solution.

The Staithe is an important asset for the town, enjoyed by residents and visitors, and it should remain a pleasant and welcoming place for everyone.

I will continue to press the organisations responsible to work together to resolve these longstanding issues.

Cannells Site, Chedgrave – Planning Appeal Open for Comments

The developers of the former Cannells site on Langley Road, Chedgrave, have appealed against South Norfolk Council's refusal of planning permission for a proposed 75-bed care home and residential development.

The original application raised considerable local concern about the scale of development, particularly the impact of the proposed buildings on neighbouring homes, including overshadowing.

The appeal is now open for public comments, and I would encourage residents to make their views known.

The Planning Inspectorate appeal reference is **6016686**, and the applicant is Bluecrest Land (Chedgrave) Limited.

You can find the appeal and submit comments through the Government's planning appeals website using this reference number:

https://www.gov.uk/appeal-planning-inspectorate

The deadline for comments is midnight on 12 November.

I will continue to follow the appeal closely and report on the outcome.

£40,000 for Alpington and Yelverton Play Area

There is very welcome news for families in Alpington and Yelverton.

Alpington with Yelverton Parish Council has secured **£40,000 from South Norfolk Council's Community Action Fund** towards a major redevelopment of the children's play area.

I would like to congratulate the Parish Council on securing this funding and recognise the support of local district councillor Lord John Fuller.

Although this is district council funding, Alpington and Yelverton are both within my County Council division, and I am delighted to see this investment benefiting local families.

Loddon and Chedgrave Traffic Improvements

I will continue to follow the outcome of the recent consultation on speed limits, pedestrian and cycling arrangements and bus stops around Beccles Road.

Any changes need to improve safety while taking account of the needs of residents, local businesses, pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

I will report further when the Council confirms its next steps.

Keeping in Touch

There are many important issues affecting our rural communities, from highway maintenance and speeding to planning, policing and access to our waterways.

Please continue to contact me about matters affecting your parish. I am always pleased to hear from residents and parish councils across the Loddon Division.

Cllr Kay Mason Billig
Norfolk County Councillor for the Loddon Division