

Report from Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris on 17th March 2026

There are a number of items which I need to report:-

1. The county council elections will take place on 7th May. These elections will be fought on the new divisional boundaries decided by the Boundary Commission some years ago. The division I currently represent, Necton and Launditch, will be renamed Launditch; Necton will be in a new division and Launditch will gain Newton-by Castle Acre, Hoe & Worthing and Swanton Morley. All other parishes remain in the new Launditch division.
2. The government has allocated an extra £27m over the next 5 years for the maintenance of highways assets. The money will be used for bridge maintenance, major road resurfacing work, improvements to the public transport infrastructure, and pothole repairs.
3. The Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government is due to make a decision this month on how many unitary councils there should be in Norfolk. The councils in Norfolk could not agree on the best solution with NCC recommending one; South Norfolk opting for 2 and the remaining 6 councils advocating 3 unitarys. The SoS's "minded to" decision will be debated in parliament in July with a change order made in September to implement the governments decision. Elections for councillors for the new unitary councils will take place in May 2027, probably with 2 councillors (one councillor has been rumoured) to represent the electorate in each current county council division. Whatever the number of unitary councils the current number of councillors will be reduced from 399 to either 168 or 84!!
4. The election of a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk has been postponed until May 2028. This election was due to be held this May and on election the new mayor would bring at least £37m per annum in funding for large scale capital projects, the promise was for additional money to be available in the future.
5. A reminder that the Parish Partnership scheme will run for the 26/27 financial year. Please get your bids in as soon as you can after the 1st April.
6. Although not in my area the Drovers solar farm between Castle Acre and Swaffham covering 2000+ acres has been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate for examination as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). The project also includes a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The examination in public will take place between June and December 2026. If approved construction will commence in 2031.
7. There have ben headlines about the level of debt carried by Norfolk County Council which is currently around £850m. This debt has been accrued to finance capital projects such as road building (Northern Broadway Long Stratton Bypass), the Yarmouth 3rd River Crossing, new schools for SEN and mainstream pupils. Due to government finance rules capital projects cannot be paid for from revenue receipts, that is council tax and other income. Although some capital is gifted from government for these projects the majority is borrowed, mostly from the Public Works Loans Board, at advantageous rates, over a 50 year period. The interest on these loans is repaid by revenue receipts (council tax and other income) and currently stand at £30m per annum. Sale of capital assets; land

and buildings etc can be used to fund capital projects but the proceeds from the sale of assets cannot be used to fund the day to day running of the council. Capital debt does not affect the council's ability to deliver services paid for from revenue receipts.

Mark Kiddle-Morris,
Member for Necton and Launditch,
Vice Chairman of Planning (Reg) Committee,
Norfolk County Council.