

June County Councillors Report

From Norfolk County Council

'Illegal Cigarettes Seized

Following inspections carried out because of intelligence received by Norfolk Trading Standards, illicit cigarettes, illegal vapes and hand-rolling tobacco has been seized from businesses in Great Yarmouth and Norwich.

The inspections were carried out with Norfolk Constabulary as part of Norfolk Trading Standards' ongoing work to tackle the sale of illegal tobacco products and protect the public.

This is a useful reminder of the role of Trading Standards, which helps ensure businesses trade fairly and legally, investigates scams and rogue traders, and works to keep consumers safe.

Further information about Trading Standards, including advice and support for businesses and consumers, is available on the county council webpages [here](#).

Residents are urged to report concerns about the illegal sale of vapes, cigarettes or tobacco to Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service – staying safe with lithium batteries

Recent incidents in Norfolk have highlighted the risks associated with lithium batteries. This reflects a wider national increase in lithium battery fires, linked to the growing use of items such as e-bikes and e-scooters.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is working with Norfolk Trading Standards to help prevent these incidents by promoting safety advice on buying batteries and devices safely, charging them correctly, using e-bikes and e-scooters safely, and disposing of lithium-ion batteries appropriately.

Further information is available on the county council webpages [here](#).

Skills England: Annual Skills Report

Skills England, the Government's national agency for skills, has published its first [Annual Skills Report](#). It sets out current and future skills needs across ten priority sectors linked to economic growth.

The report points to growing demand in sectors including clean energy, construction and digital, and highlights the importance of colleges, universities, apprenticeships and flexible training routes in helping people gain the skills employers need.

It also calls for a stronger skills system that supports the Industrial Strategy, responds more effectively to employers' needs, including SMEs, and helps more people into good jobs.

The main challenges identified are:

- tackling skills shortages and supporting workforce upskilling and reskilling
- encouraging greater employer investment in training and apprenticeships
- responding to the rapid adoption of AI
- improving employability pathways for young people
- building more responsive, place-based skills systems that reflect local economic need

The report stresses that addressing these issues will require strong partnership working between employers, education providers, local leaders and government.

Support for care leavers

The Government is expanding a programme to help children in care establish meaningful relationships for when they reach adulthood. It aims to improve outcomes for the 80,000 children in care across England, as many face significant challenges upon leaving the system. Following a pilot of 25 local areas given funding to employ coordinators, £8.4 million of funding from the Department for Education is being made available over the next three years, to ensure all children in care and leaving care are offered this support.

Norfolk County Council already has a [local offer of support](#) that sets out the support available in Norfolk to care leavers.'

Help with living costs

The Crisis Resilience Service offers financial support in the short term and ways to improve your financial resilience. Please reach out and if you have any difficulty with an application, get in touch. The Social Workers' drop ins at Heritage House, Wells, on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays in the month, or at the Glaven Centre, Blakeney, on the first Friday and 3rd Monday, can help fill in forms. No appointment needed.

Find out more at

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/41957/What-the-Crisis-and-Resilience-Service-is>

Food support can be accessed

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/accessingfood>

Help with utility bills can be found at

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/41958/Help-and-advice-with-utility-bills>

If you're on benefits you can get reduced broadband packages. I have a detailed information sheet on this so please do get in touch if you'd like to find out more.

If anyone in your household has a medical condition which means you use more water than usual, Anglian Water have a scheme (WaterSure) which caps your water bill. You do need a water meter and be on certain income related benefits.

<https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/services/extra-support/tariff-options/watersure/apply-for-watersure>

Dentistry

Applications are now open for the first 25 student places at the new dental school at the University of East Anglia. This first cohort are expected to start training Sept 2027. The undergraduate training program will be at a new £3million extension to the Edith Cavell Building. This is the first step in relieving the dental desert in Norfolk.

Every NHS dental practice offers urgent dental appointments - in North Norfolk this equates to approximately 170 appointments a month. These are accessed by calling

111. Please let me know if you have difficulty getting an appointment and I will raise this with the Integrated Care Board.

Children's Services

Children's services at NCC have been rated by Ofsted as outstanding across the board: overall effectiveness, the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection, the experience and progress of children in care, and the experience and progress of care leavers. There was one area which was identified as needing additional improvement: the recognition and consideration of young carers who receive statutory services.

Education

25 new places for children with autism are being provided at Alderman Peel High School in Wells to help the children integrate into mainstream education with the right specialist help in place. These should be completed by October 2026.

Summer reading challenge

The theme for this year's Summer Reading Challenge is Read to the Beat. Children age 4-11 can sign up at their local library, choose their own books, set their own goals and collect reward stickers for every goal reached. Children who complete their goals by the end of the challenge receive a certificate and a medal!

The books can be read online or can be collected from the library. Find out more here [Summer Reading Challenge 2026 - Norfolk County Council](#)

Tech skills

If you need to borrow a laptop, smartphone or tablet and learn how to use them; find out how to get free mobile data or a more affordable broadband tariff; if you're not sure you're getting the best out of your mobile phone; or are worried about online scams, do contact the Tech Skills for Life team at Norfolk County Council on 01485536420 or 01493448246. Find out more at [Tech Skills for Life - Norfolk County Council](#)

Road safety and maintenance

The most effective way to report a Highways defects is by submitting it via Norfolk County Council's official '[Report a highways problem](#)' form on the website. Alternatively, contact the Customer Service Centre by emailing highways@norfolk.gov.uk or calling 0344 800 8020. This allows the issue to be logged and acted on quickly.

If a defect is a pothole which wasn't fixed before a road was redressed, still report it via the defects portal, but highlight 'to the attention of a highways engineer' so it gets audited.

Similarly, if the problem is edge deterioration, please report it via the portal but highlight 'to the attention of highways rangers'.

There is still some money available in the Bus Stop Improvement Programme. This covers new bus stops, bus shelters and possibly trods. Contact me for more details.

Waste Recycling

The Wells Recycling Centre has shown a significant increase in usage since the booking system was introduced and there are no plans to close it.

My understanding is that recycling centres can accept large household appliances such as washing machines, tumble driers, dishwashers and cookers at recycling centres, but still not fridge freezers and small electricals including batteries and light bulbs. This is because NCC has to apply for a new recycling facility as the previous one was destroyed by fire.

Business support

The New Anglia Growth Hub provides support to grow your business, make it more sustainable and resilient. There are events and funding opportunities, find out more at <https://www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk>

Go Digital Funding Programme

This provides free digital business support to small and medium sized businesses. Parish Councils are eligible if they run a community hub/facility/village hall which creates an income and which provides a benefit to the community. Successful applicants receive free digital advice on websites, social media, digital tools to support their business, and can request a £500 grant to help implement a digital action plan. More detail on this at [Go Digital Application Form - New Anglia Growth Hub](#)

Dr Victoria Holliday
County Cllr Wells Division
victoria.holliday.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk
07557054629