

District Councillor Monthly Update – March 2026

Please find this month's update reflecting the Council's agreed budget, community investment plans, planning developments, and items of particular relevance to our rural parishes.

1. Budget & Final Government Settlement – What It Means for South Norfolk

South Norfolk Council has now agreed the 2026/27 budget and five-year Capital Programme of £53m, including a £5 increase in Band D Council Tax to £180.00.

Earlier this month we also received the Final Local Government Finance Settlement, which has confirmed an important change to how the Government calculates our funding:

- The Government has reduced our business rates baseline for past years from £9.757m to £8.575m, meaning less of our income is protected going forward.
- For 2026/27, the impact is mostly cancelled out by a one-off £812k Adjustment Support Grant, so next year's budget remains stable.
- However, in 2027/28 and 2028/29, no such grant is available, and the Council will receive around £1.1m less each year in Government-funded spending power than previously indicated.

What this means for the next 3 years

- 2026/27: We remain on solid ground and the balanced budget approved by Council still holds.
- 2027/28 and 2028/29: The Council will face a structural funding gap of around £1.1m per year, requiring continued efficiencies and prioritisation to protect key front-line and community services.

In simple terms: Next year is stable, but the two years after will be tighter, with around £1.1m less Government funding per year than expected.

2. Community Action Fund (CAF) – Significant New Support for Parishes

Although applications will not open until the new financial year, parishes should be aware of the enhanced opportunity ahead:

- £500,000 of new CAF funding allocated for 2026/27 (in addition to the current year's £300,000).
- The expanded fund can support village hall renovations and youth services and engagement programmes.

Parishes planning ahead will be best placed once applications open.

3. Major Community & Leisure Investments

Framingham Earl Sports Centre – £4.3m Investment

- £2,500,000 – SNC Capital Programme
- £1,100,000 – Pooled CIL
- £700,000 – Partner funding (subject to bids)

Ketts Park Leisure Centre Redevelopment – £2.7m

- The redevelopment has been added to the 2026–2028 Delivery Plan, enhancing leisure provision for a large rural catchment.

Becketts Chapel – £250,000 Provision

- A £250k budget provision has been made to support the Becketts Chapel redevelopment, pending external grant success.

4. Safeguarding Policy – Strengthened and Adopted

Council has adopted a new, comprehensive Safeguarding Policy, replacing the previous protocol. Key features include:

- Creation of a Strategic Safeguarding Board and Operational Safeguarding Board to ensure consistent safeguarding practice.
- Enhanced requirements for training and awareness for all councillors and staff.
- Updated procedures for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns.

Relevance to parishes: Village halls, community groups, and parish-supported activities will see greater expectations around safeguarding compliance, particularly for grant-funded projects.

5. Planning Guidance – New SPDs Adopted

Landscape Susceptibility SPD – Adopted

- Provides guidance on accommodating solar PV (including very large-scale schemes over 50MW), Battery Energy Storage Systems, anaerobic digestion, and grid infrastructure.

Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure SPD – Adopted

- Strengthens protection of ecological corridors, river valleys, and local green infrastructure.

GNLP Sustainable Communities SPD – Adopted

- Enhances expectations around design quality, character, and climate responsiveness.

Support

As always, I remain fully committed to listening to your concerns, supporting parish priorities, and helping to resolve issues where possible. If there are any matters you would like to discuss, or if you have questions about the budget, planning matters, or community funding opportunities, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to assist and to take your concerns forward.