

Major changes are expected in Norfolk, as part of the Government's drive for devolution and local government reform. We explain what it means.

Devolution:

Imagine if Norfolk and Suffolk, not Westminster, could make more decisions about our future. And imagine we had millions of pounds extra, every year, to make things happen.

That's what the Government is proposing through its devolution programme. Government powers and funding would be passed to combined authorities, led by elected mayors – like we see in Greater Manchester and other regions.



Councillor
Kay Mason Billig
Leader of
Norfolk County Council

“Devolution is a chance for Norfolk and Suffolk to gain powers and funding from the Government, to boost our economy and benefit our residents through better skills, transport and housing. Please have your say and take part in the Government's consultation, so we can help to shape the best possible outcome.”

The Government proposes a Norfolk and Suffolk combined county authority, with powers over housing and regeneration, local growth, adult skills and local transport.

The authority would receive millions of pounds of funding, to make decisions based on local priorities.

Take local skills. The Government currently decides priorities for investment. Under devolution, Norfolk and Suffolk could decide and invest in the skills and training required.

The Government has launched a consultation, which takes place until 13th April, so that people in Norfolk and Suffolk can have their say on devolution.

Key questions:

1 What's the role of the mayor?
The mayor would be elected by voters across Norfolk and Suffolk, to lead the combined authority. This would cover big, strategic services such as housing, regeneration and local transport.

2 What's the advantage of having a mayor? A mayor would give the area a greater profile with the Government, key partners and inward investors. The Norfolk and Suffolk mayor would join the Prime Minister, other mayors and national leaders of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the Council of Nations and Regions.

3 If this proposal is approved, when would elections take place?
The Government is proposing to hold mayoral elections in May 2026.

4 If the combined authority is created, which councils would become members? Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council would be members of the authority, until they are replaced by new unitary authorities over the next couple of years.

5 What happens if the proposal does not proceed? Norfolk and Suffolk would not receive additional powers and funding in 2026. The Government would “continue to work with local councils on the best devolution approach for their area”.

You can add your views at [Norfolk and Suffolk devolution](#). Norfolk County Council will make its own submission in April.

Local government reorganisation:



Local government reorganisation is an opportunity for Norfolk to have fewer, more efficient councils, focused on local communities.

At the moment, Norfolk is what's known as a two-tier area, with eight councils:

- a county council, which is responsible for key services such as highways and transport, adult social care and children's services
- seven district councils, which provide services such as bin collection, leisure and housing.
- The Government wants to see all eight councils replaced with fewer, unitary councils – which are responsible for all services in their area.

That presents an opportunity to:

- end confusion – people would know that one council would deliver all services in their area;
- deliver value for money – with fewer sets of senior officers, councillors and council headquarters, freeing up money to invest in services;
- join up services, to make them more effective – such as bin collection and waste disposal and enabling housing and social care to work more closely together;
- ensure strong local links, through closer working with town and parish councils.



Councillor
Kay Mason Billig
Leader of
Norfolk County Council

“People in Norfolk deserve to have the most cost effective and efficient form of local government, with strong links to our communities. I believe we can achieve that, by working together.”

Norfolk County Council and the seven district councils were invited by the Government to submit interim proposals on 21st March and then develop detailed proposals by 26th September.

Key questions:

1 Who decides how many councils are created in Norfolk? The Government, once it has considered the submissions from the current eight councils. It will use the criteria set out in the [minister's letter](#) to Norfolk's councils.

2 How big will any new council or councils be? The Government says unitary councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. For most areas, this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more, but there may be exceptions, on a case-by-case basis.

3 How much money could be saved through unitary councils? A report published this month by PWC suggests having one unitary council in Norfolk would save £29 million per year, or having two would save £9.6 million. Alternatively, having more than two would actually cost more money than the current arrangement.

You can find out more about our proposals at [Norfolk devolution](#) and we will keep you updated in future editions of [Your Norfolk](#) and the monthly digital bulletin, [Your Norfolk Extra](#)