

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

26th June 2025

COUNCILLOR ALISTAIR BEALES – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

For the period 16-05-25 to 26-06-25

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) continue to dominate my time, and this report will attempt to update elected members on those matters. However it is important to recognise that the day-to-day workings of the Borough Council and services to our residents are as important as ever and equally deserving of time, thought and input. Whilst it is not a matter for full Council, like most councillors, ward work also continues and often involves matters of huge importance to individual members of our community. As does engagement with the parish councils in my own ward and others. A busy time!

Turning to LGR, many of you will have seen that Norfolk County Council (NCC) has supported a single county unitary. The presentation of that is interesting, as NCC has sought to portray that the districts rushed to judgement with a three unitary model, and that they, NCC, have taken their time to consider the matter. The reality, as is often the case, is very different. The six district councils of Norwich City Council, Broadland District Council, Breckland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, North Norfolk District Council and this Council, put forward an interim business case advancing the idea of a three unitary model for Norfolk. The Government instructed us to develop a full business case and show how a three unit remodel could work and bring benefit to residents. That work is ongoing and the outcome will be data based.

NCC having not expressed a preference in their interim business case, issued a press release on 9th June, quoting the NCC leader saying that “one council for Norfolk is the only sensible option”. A letter of the very same date from the leader of the County Council to district leaders says that “our (NCC) focus will then be on developing a detailed proposal to be submitted to the government by 26th September”. So, having failed to work up the detail, an unequivocal and dogmatic expression of support has nevertheless been made. The gaping hole in that “logic” is there for all to see.



One council for whole of Norfolk is 'only sensible option', leader claims

Lynn News Since 1841

Meanwhile the districts, without the NCC luxury of a team of 25 or so officers, working on a single county unitary as the love child of the previous and now defunct, county deal, have engaged consultants and we are now busy looking at the detail to present a cogent and logical case in due course. In the meantime, all six districts are confident that a three unit remodel will deliver benefit that is denied to a single county unitary option that looks like the bean counters choice of just doing exactly the same thing, but on a bigger scale and hoping for a different outcome. Let's not forget that the current outcome is a County Council mired in debt with failing care homes and primary school education described as a "zombie zone" in a recent House of Lords debate. No thank you.

Before turning to specific detail of what the districts are doing and working up their solution, I must just refer to the social media input of the NCC leader. Firstly I'm astonished that the leader of a County Council has the time to spend all day on Facebook, or so it appears, and some of the comment can politely be described as inappropriate. A more accurate description is not for this report. But in the near 20 years since I first became a district councillor in 2007, I certainly haven't seen anything like it.

Turning to the progress of the District 6 (as I call them), a regular Teams meeting is held every week so that leaders and chief executive officers can share information, measure progress and ensure that everyone is up to speed. An in person meeting was held with the Local Government Information Unit at Breckland Council on 2nd June. The intention was to look at the broad geography and population numbers of a potential three unitary solution, and it was agreed that unitary boundaries can only be proposed when in full possession of the data that allows proper understanding of financial sustainability.

Leaders also regularly attend District Council network seminars mostly online and I would recommend to all members but you watch the recordings or try and attend. They are most useful.

The procurement process for consultants was recently completed and Inner Circle Consulting were engaged and met with leaders in person on Monday the 9th of June. This was an initial meeting to put names to faces and to kick off the preparation of our business case.

Further meetings have taken place since, including dedicated meetings for the western area which involved us, Breckland Council and North Norfolk District Council and the consultants.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Our unitary brand has been agreed as Future Norfolk and a dedicated website will be launched very soon detailing devo/LGR to public and elected members alike.

A launch event will be held at the Royal Norfolk Show when I am doing the presentation of behalf of the six district councils.

As per MHCLG guidance, NCC have agreed to appoint district representatives to a devolution steering group (tasked with setting up the new Mayoral authority). The leader representative is the Leader of Breckland, Cllr. Sam Chapman Allan and the CEO representative is our own Kate Blakemore. Those meetings are ongoing.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Date	Meeting	Travel time required
15 May	Annual Council	
16 May	DCN: LGR Support webinar	
	Leaders/Chief Execs/ North Norfolk/Breckland	Y
	Lovell Charity Ball	
16 May	District Leaders – Devo	
19 May	LGIU meeting ahead of boundary workshop	
	Norfolk District Leaders – Devo	
	Devo - Norfolk District Leaders and Chief Execs	
	Leaders/Chief Executive catch up	
20 May	Breckland Leader	
	DCN Webinar – LGR	
21 May	Norfolk food hall, reception and opening	Y
	CPP	
23 May	All Group Leaders	
	IT issues	
	KLNB – Gyrotry on-site briefing	Y
	KL Neighbourhood Board	Y
27 May	AI with IT	

	Norfolk District Leaders – Devo	
	Devo - Norfolk District Leaders and Chief Execs	
28 May	Florence Fields – air quality	
	Property officer re Norfolk Museum Survive	
	Member Briefing – National Grid	
29 May	Capital Plan	
	David Goddard	
	Festival Too – sponsors evening	
2 June	Planning committee	
	LG Boundary workshop	Y
	Brandland Launch event – emerging branding cluster	Y
3 June	Labour Leaders briefing	
	QEH onsite issues	
	Thank you reception (coastal pollution)	
	Leader/Chief Executive briefing	
	Devo – Norfolk Leaders	
4 June	Audit and Risk	
	BSG – Ecolit catch up	
	Transformation Programme	
	Cabinet Briefing	
	R &D	
9 June	Monitoring Officer catch up	
	Kick off meeting with consultants 3 unitary Norfolk	Y
	IP group meeting	
10 June	Cabinet	
11 June	Present raffle for Tapping House	
	Fire Service Champion for West Norfolk	Y
	Tour and Talk – Aickman's Yard	
	Reform Leaders meeting	
	Personnel re Norfolk Show	
	Consultation information working group	
12 June	Members Champion for Culture	
	Member working group	
	Member Briefing	
	Informal Member focus	
13 June	Hanse Festival Business Breakfast	
	Hanse Festival Business Networking event	
	Area group LGR meeting	
16 June	Norfolk District Leaders – Devo	
	Devo – Leaders and Chief Executives	
17 June	Paul Bland and Leaders	
	Conservative Group Leaders	
	R&D catch up	
	PRP for Chief Executive	
	C & P	
18 June	Springwood – car parking	
	Outside bodies review	
	Progressive Group Leaders briefing	
	Cabinet Briefing	

	Member briefing – St George's Guildhall	
19 June	KLTB chairs update	
	Stakeholder interviews re team coaching	
	Transport East Webinar	
	Terry Jermy MP	
20 June	High Sheriff garden party	
23 June	Monitoring Officer	
	Focus on local Government Reorganisation	
	Devo – Norfolk District Leaders	
24 June	LGE Round table discussion, navigating the LGR journey in the East	
	Leader/Chief Executive briefing	
	Pre – Council briefing with Mayor	
	Meeting with Cllr J Lowe	
25 June	Shareholder Committee	
26 June	Royal Norfolk Show	
	Annual Council	