

Cabinet Members Report to Council

29th July Council Meeting

Councillor Alistair Beales – Leader of the Council

Report to Council for the period to 21 st July 2026
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1 Progress on Portfolio Matters
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I am a little saddened to have to report a poor working relationship with the new minority administration at Norfolk County Council. I hasten to clarify that my disappointment is focussed upon the behaviour of a handful of mostly senior members. Nor is it party political, as a proud Independent, I judge on merit not on stripe. And our own Reform grouping here at the Borough continue to grow their knowledge and represent their community with vigour and growing aplomb and some NCC members should perhaps take heed of their way of doing things.

First a little context. I have been a Borough Councillor with one four year gap, since 2007. A parish councillor for many years before that. At this council, I was Deputy Leader to two different Borough leaders. I have personally brought forward and gained support for proposals that have delivered hundreds of high quality new homes on brownfield sites, new sports facilities (2 new hockey pitches and 4 new tennis courts), new roads, new cycle paths, refurbished derelict properties under the Townscape Heritage Initiative, refurbished the bus station, resurfaced the Tuesday and Saturday Market Place car parks and installed new street furniture etc, brought forward the building of new commercial and industrial units. And played a significant role in rebuilding the Borough finances with the help of all elected colleagues over the last few years. The list goes on. I rarely list these things, never brag about it and just see it as my duty as an elected representative.

As Leader I have pursued a pragmatic and consensual approach and have often been able to overcome division and bring resolution in sometime difficult circumstance both at this council and more widely with colleagues at partner councils in Norfolk, particularly with regard to Local Government Reorganisation. Over those years, both as Leader and prior to that, I have seen many councillors and many administrations at work, so when I say I am very disappointed and angry with the way some in the minority Reform administration behave, I undoubtedly have a point.

As I said in answer to a question at our last Council, LGR is the biggest point of difference with the new minority administration at County Hall. I have not seen policy conducted in this way and hope to never see it again. What we have is an application for Judicial Review from NCC that was agreed behind closed doors, with no idea which councillor agreed it, where the money will come from and no idea how much. No debate, no meeting in public, no accountability, no transparency. Technically correct. Morally bankrupt.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

Despite the difficulties I continue to try and engage with the minority administration at County Hall.

I am keen to progress the work of the Community Project Fund and Budget Setting Task Group and look forward to the first meeting scheduled for 3rd September 2026.

I am keen to hear members views on these reports to Council. Both members and officers have raised doubts about their effectiveness in our modern world and there is perhaps a better way. All views welcome. Please.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Compiling a list is onerous and of doubtful value so my past meeting diary is available upon request.