

Runhall Community Group – Recreation Ground Progress Report (2025/26)

Runhall Community Group (RCG) has had a productive and successful year, continuing to enhance and maintain the Recreation Ground as a valued community asset serving Runhall and neighbouring villages.

Community Use & Engagement

The Recreation Ground remains well used by residents of all ages for play, socialising and community events. Footfall and participation have increased, supported by a strong programme of events including Runfest, which raised £3,337, alongside a Halloween event (£538), raffles and community initiatives such as the Big Litter Pick. These activities continue to strengthen community cohesion and local involvement.

Maintenance & Safety

A ROSPA inspection (June 2025) confirmed the site is generally low risk, with no high-risk issues identified. Ongoing maintenance has been carried out by volunteers, including vegetation clearance and equipment upkeep. Some items, particularly swings and the basketball area, are showing wear and will require replacement or improvement.

Financial Position

RCG has strengthened its financial position, building reserves above £2,000 to cover essential running costs. Fundraising remains strong, and the group is now in a position to pursue external grant funding to support further improvements.

Play Area Development

Phases 1–3 of the Recreation Ground improvement programme have been successfully delivered, including seating, new play equipment, an inclusive roundabout and a defibrillator. Over £5,000 has been invested through community fundraising and volunteer effort.

Next Steps – Phase 4

RCG is now progressing Phase 4, which will focus on renewing the basketball area and replacing worn swings, including the addition of accessible equipment. Grant applications are underway, supported by continued community fundraising.

Summary:

RCG continues to demonstrate strong community leadership, financial responsibility and commitment to maintaining and improving this important local facility.

Chairman's Report April 2026

2025 was a business as usual year and very similar to 2024. Whilst there were a number of events taking place within the parish there was no major national event nor were there any elections.

The council consisting of myself, Mike Webb, Clare Kay, Peter Wood, Andrew Gill and John Baldock have been members all year and we are still seeking to fulfil the one outstanding role by co-option as soon as possible.

The roles are not onerous from a time viewpoint as we seek to run this council in a simple yet effective way – the focus being on fulfilling our regulatory requirements, liaising with both the South Norfolk District and Norfolk County Councils, helping to maintain the environment and supporting local groups who want to run events. There is a major local government reorganisation taking place at the moment and we wait to see what if any changes that brings.

The parish benefits from having a number of active community groups which make use of the facilities in the Parish - Welborne Village Hall, the Runhall Allotments, the Runhall Play Area and the Exchange (in the Old Phone Box in Runhall) – and the local churches. Details of their activities will be covered in their own separate reports. The council has supported these groups throughout 2025 including facilitating obtaining grants from the district council.

The parish also benefits from a large group of parishioners who fulfil various voluntary roles supporting the council and the parish – Footpath wardens, litter wardens and newsletter distributors.

Planning

We continue to review all planning applications in our parish that are relevant and we dealt with 7 in 2025 (for context there were 10 in 2024 and 6 in 2023).

The Parish Council was supportive or neutral on all of the applications and all, bar one, were approved by South Norfolk. It is helpful for any planning discussions at the council if the residents who are making the planning applications decisions attend the planning meetings.

Highways

We continue to work with the County Council Highways department to resolve problems within the parish and to ensure we get our fair share of general maintenance. This year we have seen:

- new signage in Welborne
- issues dealt with in terms of signage and ditches
- ongoing work on potholes of which there are many across the Parish

Everyone in the parish can help by ensuring all Highways issues are reported promptly via the Norfolk County Council online system, which ensures they are in Highways prioritisation system.

PROW's

All the PROW's are reviewed on a regular basis by our four PROW wardens and any issues raised with Norfolk County Council who have responsibility for them. The council would like to thank these people for their work during the year. The PROW's have remained generally in good condition throughout the year, with only occasional issues caused by heavy rainfall.

Litter

All of our four villages currently have volunteer Litter Wardens in place. They work throughout the year removing litter from the local area and thus improving the environment. The roadside verges remain the main problem areas. The council is very grateful for the job they do and would like to thank them for their efforts. It is also important that everyone in the parish takes care of the parish to ensure it remains a pleasant living area.

Budgets

The council has run a balanced budget over the past year and aims to do so again in 2026. Due to inflationary increases the Council had to raise the Parish Council precept by approximately 5%.

Communication

The newsletter has been distributed following most council meetings – thank you to the team of volunteers who do the distribution. The parish website is kept up-to-date and has been refreshed this year.

Future Activity

The council will continue keeping on top of business as usual whilst supporting parishioners in any extra activity.

Finally I would like to give thanks to some people. In particular I would like to thank our parish clerk, Bev Long, who has continued to provide excellent support to the council.

I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for the time they give up and the support they provide across all the issues we deal with. In addition I would like to thank our local councillors Margaret Dewsbury (Norfolk County Council) and Richard Elliot (South Norfolk District) who have continued to provide guidance and support throughout the year.

Finally I would also like to thank all the different groups who operate within the parish and all parishioners for enabling our parish to thrive.

Simon Guest

Chair Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall and Welborne Parish Council 11 April 2026

Footpaths covered - FP 12, RB 13, FP 14, FP 15

- FP 12 has no issues. All signage is clear and present and the grass has been kept cut at a sensible height. The path is wide and easy to walk on.
- FP 15 has no issues. The gravel path has a few potholes but only small ones. There is a clear sign at the end of the footpath where it meets the road.
- RB 13 is a tarmacked road and the surface is good. There is no signage indicating that the public can walk on it (There are signs saying it is Private Property) meaning prior knowledge of the footpath is necessary.
- FP 14 goes through farmland. The specific route of the footpath deviates from the official Norfolk County Council footpath map but I personally think the current route is a better route (it's further away from farm buildings). The last time I used the footpath both sections of the path were roped off and I had to duck under the rope to continue using the path. This was no problem for me but someone with mobility problems may find this difficult. I also feel that there could be better/clearer signage as to where exactly the footpath route is. The surface of the path has improved since my last report (large potholes and tractor tracks have been filled in making the path much smoother).

Overall, the paths are generally well maintained and usage should not be a problem in most cases.

Jack Long

Coston Footpath Warden. April 2026

Norfolk County Council Annual Report

Devolution and Local government Reform

One of the main discussions this year was Devolution – a government plan to put both Norfolk and Suffolk together under the control of a Mayor. A Mayor should have been elected this year, but it was deferred until 2028.

The other main topic has been Local government Reform. The County and District Councils were asked to submit their preferences regarding the number of Unitaries that should cover Norfolk. Six Districts preferred three unitaries, one preferred two and the County Council preferred one. The government has decided that both Norfolk and Suffolk should be made up of three Unitary Councils. The election for members of these will be held next year.

Services

NCC provides 87 different services, but I will only update on the main ones and things that may be of interest.

Budget

NCC delivered a balanced budget in 2025-26 and has approved a balanced budget for 2026-27. This included identifying £42.3 million in savings and efficiencies and committing £76.3 million to protect vital services such as Adults and Children's Services.

Children's Services

Our Children's Services is one of the best in the country. It was considered Good by the last Ofsted Inspection. It has recently been inspected and was considered to be even better, but the result will not be announced until May. They have about 1,000 children in care but still need some more Foster Carers as an average of five children come into care each week.

The Service transports 18,600 children to school everyday which is quite expensive. To reduce costs the Service is gradually providing new Special Schools or extensions to current schools to reduce the amount of time children have to spend travelling. The Government is providing funding for two new SEND schools in Gt Yarmouth and Downham Market.

The Holiday Fund which provides free holiday activities such as sport, swimming, arts and crafts and outdoor activities also free meals for children and young people, who are eligible for benefits such as free school meals, was very successful and will continue this year.

Adult Services

The demand for Adult Services continues to increase as we have an increasingly ageing population in Norfolk. They are currently increasing the number of independent living facilities as people prefer this to going into a home.

Adult Learning Service

Adult Learning and Skills plays a vital role in addressing skills gaps by providing a variety of training for employment of hobbies using community venues, including libraries, as well as courses on line. They also have a Construction Centre in Norwich where people can learn skills for new employment or to do their own DIY work.

Public Health

NCC's Public Health Department launched a new campaign to encourage residents aged 50 and over to prioritise their health. A new website called 'It's never too late' was launched to highlight ways that local residents could improve their health and wellbeing.

5G Coverage

Over the years £8 million has been invested in 5G coverage which now supports communication for over 90% of Norfolk.

Heating Oil fund

Due to escalating issues NCC has set up a new Norfolk Heating Oil Fund to support low-income households who rely on heating oil and are at risk of losing access to heating and hot water due to sharply increasing prices and demand.

Highways

Last year the Council appointed Kier as its long-term contractor responsible for the maintenance and construction of our highway network of over 6,000 miles of roads as well as pedestrian and cycle paths. We believe the Government Grant for Highways Maintenance will gradually increase from £56 million in 2025/26 to £83 million by 2029/30.

Last year 58 new gritters with automated salting, completed 66 runs and used 14,800 tonnes of salt. Each three hour, gritting run treats 2,200 miles of roads. There are 2000 grit bins located across the county that local people can use on the roads.

They also have pothole machines to deal with the never ending, number of potholes caused by the extra wet weather and heavy vehicles. Over the last year 320 miles of roads were part of a road surface dressing programme which seals roads to help prevent potholes forming.

Parish Partnership Scheme

The Parish Partnership Scheme enables NCC and Parish Councils to fund local projects on a 50/50 basis. Proposals have to be submitted by December for projects proposed for the following year. In December it was agreed to contribute £384,517 to 99 projects which include new roads, signage, benches, village gateways, speed signs and access improvements.

Local Member Highway Fund

Each year since 2017 Councillors have had a Highways Grant that they can use to support a wide range of local highways schemes and projects.

Grants for Community Projects

Last year NCC launched a new Norfolk Community Fund, enabling each of the 84 councillors to allocate £5,000 in their Divisions to support local projects. Projects were also given the opportunity to join the NCC Crowdfunder to attract further donations.

Norwich Western Link

Following a year of much discussion as to whether the proposed Norwich Western Link will be funded, the Department for Transport has said it will remain in their Major Road Network programme and nearly £1 million will be released to NCC to continue preparing for it.

Fire Service

The Fire Service has purchased some new equipment this year to enable them to deal with wild fires as well as boats to help with flooding and water based emergencies as we have two hundred miles of inland waterways in the county. All of the fire appliances, and operational officers, have also been provided with a body worn camera for use at incidents. They include location data and two way communication with the control room to enable quicker, better informed, decision making during complex incidents.

Trading Standards.

Trading standards have also provided its officers with body worn camera for use during investigations.

Trading Standards have been working closely with the Police, businesses and community groups to help keep people aware of SCAMs as well as their work warning people about Bird Flu and other issues re protecting wild life.

Recycling

People are getting used to booking a time slot to visit the recycling centres. Over 87% of people surveyed said it met their requirements and they were pleased not to have to join long queues to use their local centre.

The Household Hazardous Waste Days were appreciated last year and will be continued this year. The dates have recently been publicised.

Wymondham Recycling Centre will soon be moved to a new larger site adjacent to the A11 between Wymondham and Attleborough.

Environment

NCC has not yet met its aim to plant one million trees to support the environment and tackle climate change but so far 850,00 trees have been planted.

Business Support

Business Support has been working with villages to try to improve the footfall in our High Streets and their High Streets Matter campaign has already helped 23 towns by providing local businesses with advice, training and grants. Their Hospitality Matters campaign has been supporting independent businesses such as pubs, cafes, restaurants and hotels to help improve their resilience and profitability by providing training and grants.

Norwich Castle

The National Lottery Heritage Fund contributed £13 million to redeveloping the castle including showing how the Keep would have looked when King Henry visited in 1121.

Many other areas have been refurbished including installing a lift to enable everybody, including wheelchair users, to access all floors from basement to the battlements where they can enjoy views across Norwich.

The other museums have also provided new displays and events which people enjoyed during the year.

Libraries

The libraries are gradually being refurbished. The larger new libraries in Gt Yarmouth and Kings Lynn have been a great success with visits to Gt Yarmouth increasing from 1,041 to 5,325 in the first week of opening and Kings Lynn increasing from 905 to 6,326 visits in the first week of opening.

Libraries provide a wide range of services, as well as books, eg. activities for all ages from Bounce and Rhyme, to animation, coding and robotics and Knit and Natter. They provide information on council services, e-books and audio as well as computers and laptops to use, with staff support if necessary.

Last year more than 500 children took part in the DigiFest and the children's Summer Reading scheme for 4 – 11 year olds had an increase of 10% more children getting involved. The theme was Nature and the Great Outdoors.

This year is the National Year of Reading so there will be a range of provision for all ages as we know reading can reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

This is just a small selection of the work that has gone on during the year.

Cllr. Margaret Dewsbury

Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships

Norfolk County Council: Hingham Division

South Norfolk Council: Easton Ward

Annual Report to Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall & Welborne Parish Council

Period covered: April 2025 – March 2026

Presented by: Cllr Richard Elliott, District Councillor

1. Introduction

I am pleased to present my annual report to the Parish Councils of Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall and Welborne, covering the period from April 2025 to March 2026.

Over the past year, local government has continued to operate in a context of **significant national change**, including mounting financial pressures, reforms to local government funding, and the Government's decision to pursue **Local Government Reorganisation** across Norfolk.

Throughout this period, my priority has remained clear:

to **represent and protect the interests of our rural parishes**, to ensure that local voices are heard as strategic decisions are taken, and to support residents through a time of increasing uncertainty and transition.

2. Planning Context, Barnham Broom and Community-Led Representation

While there are no housing allocations within Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall or Welborne under the Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan, recent experience in **neighbouring Barnham Broom** has demonstrated clearly how planning decisions in one parish can still have wider implications for surrounding villages.

Following the Examination, the **Independent Inspector removed the proposed housing allocation at Barnham Broom**, having heard detailed **local representations and well-evidenced objections**. This was a significant outcome and an important reminder that the planning process is not one-sided.

The Inspector's decision reinforced a key principle:

that **community-led engagement, supported by clear evidence and local knowledge, can and does influence outcomes**, even where national policy continues to press for higher housing delivery.

For smaller rural parishes, the lesson is an important one. Development pressures tend to be assessed across clusters of villages, and cumulative impacts — such as traffic, access, drainage, and pressure on rural infrastructure — do not stop at parish boundaries. Where communities work together, present coherent arguments, and engage constructively with the planning process, those voices can carry real weight.

Looking ahead, with work expected to begin on the **next South Norfolk Local Plan**, and against a backdrop of **increased housing requirements nationally**, I will continue to emphasise the importance of proportionate growth and robust

consideration of rural constraints, ensuring that local knowledge and parish representations continue to be heard and taken seriously.

3. Council Finances and Council Tax – The Year Ahead (2026/27)

South Norfolk Council faces one of the **tightest financial environments for many years** as we move into 2026/27. This reflects the combined impact of national funding reforms and uncertainty created by Local Government Reorganisation.

For 2026/27, the District Council element of council tax will increase by **£5 at Band D**, taking it to £180 per year — representing **just 7% of the total council tax bill**. Even this maximum permitted increase does not compensate for the scale of funding changes imposed nationally.

From 2026/27 onwards, South Norfolk is operating within a **new three-year national settlement**, including a Fair Funding Assessment, the abolition of the New Homes Bonus, and a reset of business rates. While the Council can balance the budget in the short term, **the medium-term funding outlook is clearly tightening**.

4. Capital Programme – Focused Investment Ahead of Reorganisation

Despite these pressures, South Norfolk Council continues to invest through a **deliberately reshaped and disciplined capital programme**.

For 2026/27, the approved programme totals approximately **£16.9 million**, prioritising deliverable schemes ahead of reorganisation. Investment is focused on:

- health and leisure infrastructure,
- primary care facilities,
- environmental and waste services,
- public realm improvements, and
- digital and IT resilience.

The emphasis has been on **essential infrastructure**, avoiding speculative projects and preventing the creation of long-term revenue pressures that would disadvantage rural communities.

5. Local Government Reorganisation – Implications for Our Parishes

During the year, the Government confirmed its intention to replace Norfolk's existing councils with **new unitary authorities from 2028**.

For Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall and Welborne, this means becoming part of the **new West Norfolk Unitary Council**. Decision-making will take place across a much wider geography, with fewer councillors representing larger areas.

This carries risks, particularly for small rural parishes, including:

- decision-making becoming **more remote**,
- increased competition for attention and resources, and
- fewer opportunities for informal local influence.

As a result, **parish councils will become even more important** as the most immediate and local form of democratic representation. My focus throughout the transition has been on safeguarding rural interests, maintaining strong parish engagement, and ensuring service continuity.

6. Norfolk County Council Elections – May

The **Norfolk County Council elections in May** take place at a critical moment.

County councillors elected this year will be responsible for overseeing key services — highways, education, adult social care — while also playing a role in managing the transition to unitary government.

At a time of such significant structural change, there is a strong case for **experience, continuity and stability**, ensuring that complex reforms are handled responsibly and that rural communities are not overlooked during transition.

7. Supporting Residents and Casework

Throughout the year, I have continued to support residents across the parishes with a wide range of issues, including:

- planning and enforcement matters,
- waste and environmental concerns,
- housing-related queries, and
- council tax and benefits support.

This individual casework remains a vital part of my role, helping residents navigate increasingly complex systems.

8. Working with Parish Councils

I would like to thank Members of the Parish Councils of Brandon Parva, Coston, Runhall and Welborne for their continued engagement and constructive working relationships.

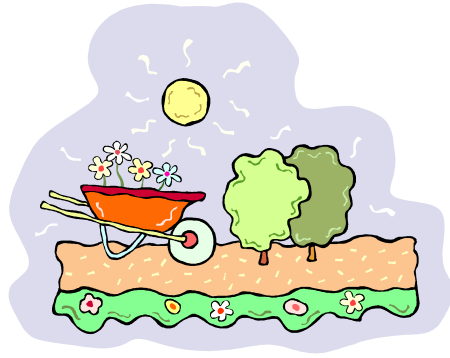
Strong communication between parish and district levels will become increasingly important as we move towards reorganisation and as strategic decisions are taken at a wider scale.

9. Closing Remarks

The year ahead will bring **continued financial pressure, structural change, and planning challenges**.

My priority remains to ensure that these parishes retain a clear voice, fair representation, and appropriate consideration as Norfolk's local government landscape changes.

Cllr Richard Elliott
April 2026



RUNHALL RECREATION GROUND - Charity number 244796

Report for the Annual Parish Meeting - April 2026

- The trustees have met several times since last year with various email communications between meetings.
- The trustees have inspected the plots on 2 occasions
- A small change in tenants occurred - vacant plots were then let to people on the waiting list
- Rents for the coming year have been collected and banked. We have no vacant plots and have 2 people on the waiting list.
- We continue to monitor the use and condition of the allotments with twice annual inspections – the condition of the majority is now very good.
- Our annual return for this year has been submitted to the Charities commission.
- Our insurance was renewed in the summer.

If you would like to know more about the Recreation Ground – which was left to Runhall in an Inclosure of 1853 – please search on the Charity Commissions website.

Trustees – Bev Long, Liz Holmes, Caroline Blacklock, Debbie Chester.

Point of contact – Bev Long. Tel; 01362 850162 Email; brownowlbev@gmail.com