

Report from your County Councillor, Cllr Steffan Aquarone



Devolution

At the time of writing, rumours are circulating that the Government is planning on having another stab at unitary authorities - getting rid of District and County Councils and rolling their functions together into so-called Unitary Authorities (some of which already exist in other rural areas like Cornwall).

As a Liberal Democrat I have several concerns about these plans in practice, as well as some in principle. My main concern is to ensure that the people of Norfolk are well represented locally, and can access services wherever they live. There are some common sense benefits of unitaries, but the most concerning aspect is the extent to which they pave the way for elected mayors - in this case one for the whole of the East of England, and together take power away from local hands and towards Whitehall.

Any such change in Norfolk could have a profound impact on Parish Councils too.

Currently all the discussion is based on speculation - there are no firm plans, no authoritative maps of how Norfolk would be split up, and not (yet) any white paper going through Parliament. This could all change before Christmas but we have been in this position before.

I welcome your views on this.

Latest coronavirus information

The latest information on the **government response** can be found [here](#).

On July 24th it became mandatory to wear a mask in all shops, including takeaways and coffee shops, on public transport and relevant hubs such as train stations, in banks, building societies and post offices. [This link](#) provides information on the correct procedures for wearing a face covering, and who is exempt.

Norfolk's director of public health was also provided with the power to recommend governments to close premises, shut public outdoor spaces and cancel events locally if appropriate.

In addition the Local Government Secretary has confirmed how the [£500 million of additional support](#) to help with coronavirus-related spending pressures will be allocated to individual councils. The extra £500 million has been allocated to councils based on

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population and levels of deprivation, and how the costs of delivery of services varies across the country.

And Norfolk County Council has been awarded £1.015m from central government to support people in our county experiencing food hardship. Half the fund will be deployed through the Local Assistance Scheme, which can take referrals from NCC's front door, social care, district councils or a number of partners. NCC is in discussions with partners as to how the remaining funds can best support ongoing community efforts.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

Regular updates

I am sending regular updates to my local mailing list - to join, visit this link:
<http://bit.ly/meltonconstable>