

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT MAY 2025

The Place has officially opened in Great Yarmouth

On 13 May, The Place - a new £17m library and learning hub - officially opened its doors to the public inside the former Palmers building in the town's Market Place.

The new site brings together library services, learning spaces and a higher education campus all under one roof.

Almost 150 guests were invited to the Market Place venue to hear speeches, enjoy refreshments and witness a plaque being unveiled by The Lady Dannatt MBE, Lord-Lieutenant for Norfolk, before a cake was cut by the Mayor of Great Yarmouth.

Members of the public then enjoyed a range of activities, displays, taster sessions and tours to see what is on offer. The opening also featured displays telling the history of the building, a mini family art trail and a display of photographs featuring some of Palmers' memorable window displays from its heyday.

As well as being home to the new library, East Coast College and the University of Suffolk will offer courses at The Place. The impressive venue also includes Norfolk County Council adult learning facilities and registrar services.

The project was funded via £8.1m from the Government's Town Deal, with a further £3.4m from the Future High Streets Fund. East Coast College and University of Suffolk contributed £3.7m and Norfolk County Council £2.3m.

Norfolk County Council at UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum

Norfolk will be vying with local authorities from across the country at a major real estate event in a bid to showcase the region as a leading-edge and profitable place to invest.

More than 16,000 professionals from national and local government, investors, developers, end-users and the wider built environment industry will be attending UKREiIF 2025 - the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum - at the Royal Armouries Museum and New Dock in Leeds from 20-22 May.

Norfolk County Council will be one of more than 275 councils hoping that conversations during the conference and at its promotional stand branded 'Ambitious for Norfolk' will result in investors and businesses being lured to the county.

[An Ambitious for Norfolk website](#) has been launched to promote a range of commercial property opportunities that are available across the county and the investment potential offered by Norwich and Great Yarmouth.

Facts about Norfolk's economy with which they hope to tempt investors include:

- Significant investments in clean energy, with £39 billion forecasted over the next 20 years.
- Home to Norwich Research Park a globally leading centre in scientific research and innovation.
- Manufacturing represents 10.4% of the region's GVA total output - above the national average of 9.4%.

Support for rural high street businesses

A hundred businesses in eight pilot towns will take part in a Retail Excellence programme as part of High Streets Matter, a Norfolk County Council initiative to develop skills and accelerate footfall.

Community groups and individuals will also be able to apply for funding for projects designed to raise awareness of their market town and instil pride in the area through the campaign.

Alexandra Hemen, a High Growth Business Advisor with New Anglia Growth Hub and former Head of Retail at Adnams, is using her expertise to deliver a Retail Excellence programme for 100 businesses in eight pilot towns. The programme launches this summer in Dereham, Diss, Fakenham and North Walsham and this winter in Attleborough, Aylsham, Gorleston-on-Sea and Hunstanton.

Norfolk has a better-than-average survival rate for new businesses, with 63% of businesses surviving after three years compared to the UK average of 56%.

Norfolk Creativity and Wellbeing Week

Norfolk Creativity and Wellbeing Week celebrates the power of creativity and culture to support health and wellbeing across Norfolk.

Taking place from 19-25 May 2025, this annual national festival brings together events and activities that shine a spotlight on how creative experiences can support mental health, reduce isolation, and encourage connection.

In Norfolk, there's a selection of in person and online events delivered by Norfolk County Council's libraries, adult learning, museums and record office, alongside brilliant local artists and arts organisations. From craft workshops and dance to music, nature walks and creative writing - there's something for everyone.

Many events are free or low-cost, and they are designed to be inclusive and accessible.