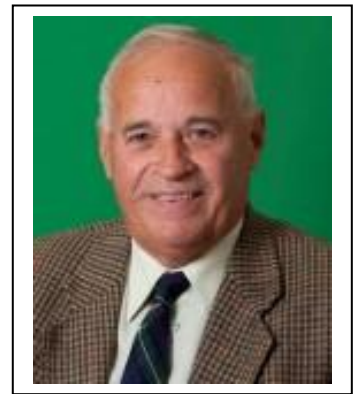


Parish Report January 2025

Councillor

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Information Updates

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/preparing-for-flooding>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

Suffolk Economic Strategy

At Cabinet on Tuesday 3 December, a new economic strategy was tabled which followed the creation of the Suffolk Business Board earlier in 2024. The Board produced a strategy for the county for the next five years, listing the areas which are most important to the Suffolk economy, including clean energy, agriculture, tourism, and ports and logistics. It also outlined how the Board hopes that digital innovation, AI and robotics can help drive improvements and growth in these areas, along with plans to support start ups, provide business mentoring and skills projects with young people.

My group asked questions about the impact of Sizewell C on the tourism industry, and the competition for workers where Sizewell was offering wages that local hospitality businesses, for example, would be unable to match. We also expressed concern that the strategy barely mentioned arts, heritage and culture, and that no arts or cultural organizations were represented on the Board. The plan was approved by the council's Cabinet, and the Suffolk Business Board will now finalise how it plans to deliver the strategy, and will report back to Cabinet every year on their progress.

Children's Services Improvement Plans

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 5 December to review the plan for improvement following the Ofsted inspection of the council's children's social care provision earlier in the year. The Ofsted report was published in August 2024 and the council learned it had dropped two grades, from being rated Outstanding in 2019 its current grade of Requires Improvement. The council had to produce an action plan for improvement which it has submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education.

The Cabinet member for children's services and officers from the department attended the committee meeting to outline the actions they have taken so far, including recruitment of extra staff members to drive improvement, and arranging peer reviews with other councils. There will also be a new Strengthening Services for Children and Families Board, which will be chaired by the council's Chief Executive, Nicola Beach. The council particularly needs to improve services for care leavers and consistency of practice and quality assurance - this means reviewing interactions with children and families to make sure the council is doing the best it can to help them.

This work is separate to the council's improvement work for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which is subject to a separate inspection process by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Devolution and Council Reorganization

Following the new government's shelving of the previous devolution deal for Suffolk, the Government has published a white paper outlining the approach they wish to see in reforming local government, including the abolition of district councils. Elected mayors and large (500,000) unitary authorities are the goal for the largest local government reform since 1972, when the two (three including parish councils) tier local governance structure was introduced.

While there are obvious benefits to having a 'one stop shop' for all things local government, if this is to be introduced without losing the 'local' from local government the minimum resident number needs to be more flexible. With the recommended figure in the paper being a minimum 500,000 residents per council, this means only one council for the whole of Suffolk (760,000 residents) would fit this requirement.

We will know more about how this reorganization will happen over the coming months.

Suffolk and East of England councils seek fairness in the face of energy projects

Suffolk County Council is joining with other local authorities in the region to challenge National Grid and the government on energy projects, demanding fairness for their communities and environment.

The county councils from Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Lincolnshire all face similar challenges with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being planned for their counties.

These are typically related to energy projects, including solar farms, wind turbines, pylons and the infrastructure associated offshore wind farms, such as substations and cabling.

Two of Suffolk County Council's main concerns, shared with the other counties, are:

- The uncoordinated approach to NSIPs - this is creating significant challenges for Suffolk's rural communities under the current planning policy as applied by the planning inspectorate and Secretary of State
- The government's 2030 target for decarbonising the electricity grid – this is too hasty, making it impossible to deliver alternative solutions to pylon projects like Norwich to Tilbury

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Thousands

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Bargain

Epic new strategy positions Suffolk at cutting edge of UK economy

Suffolk

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Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)