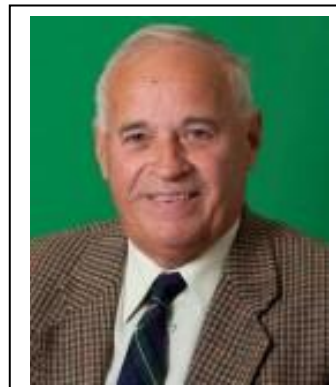


Parish Report December 2025

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>

Government Consultation on Council Reorganisation

On 19 November, the government launched their consultation on the two proposals submitted for council reorganisation in Suffolk. Suffolk County Council developed and submitted a business case for the government proposing one council for the whole county, and the districts and boroughs submitted a business case proposing three councils, Western Suffolk, Central and Eastern, and Ipswich and Southern Suffolk. The government consultation is different from local consultations you may have filled out recently, and central government will be making the decision on what councils will look like in Suffolk in future.

This consultation is only available until 11 January 2026, a relatively short time for Suffolk residents to express their preferences. You can find the consultation here: <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/norfolk-suffolk/>

If you want to read through the business cases proposed for the changes, there are links to them on the consultation page above, or they can also be found here:

Three Councils for Suffolk:

<https://threecouncilsforsuffolk.org/wp-content/uploads/Three-Councils-For-Suffolk-Case-for-Change-1.pdf>

One Suffolk:

<https://onesuffolkcouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/HI-RES-WEB-FINAL-LGR-BUSINESS-CASE-Compressed.pdf>

Financial Pressures

On 4 November, Cabinet reviewed the council's financial performance for the first two quarters of the 2025-26 financial year. The council is now predicting an overspend for the year of £20.8m, which it will have to fund using its Risk Reserve. This is an increase of £7.5m compared to the prediction at the end of quarter one. Council financial reserves are forecast to reduce by £37m overall during the year, which is extremely worrying and unsustainable. The Dedicated Schools Grant 'negative reserve', a debt relating to Special Education Needs and Disabilities spend, is likely to be -£72.9m by the end of the year.

The government allows local authorities to hold this debt via a 'statutory override' which is due to expire in March 2028. If the provision for this expires, it is likely that many councils in the country – not just Suffolk County Council – would be unable to balance their budgets. As well as SEND, overspends at the council are mostly in adult and children's social care.

Planning for Emergencies

At Scrutiny Committee on 20 November, the council's business continuity arrangements were reviewed. Business continuity refers to how the council ensures it is able to continue providing essential services in situations of emergency, for example power outages, flooding, or pandemic illness like Covid 19. Members of the Joint Emergency Planning Unit joined the meeting to explain that all directorates at the council held plans for possible scenarios and incidents, with directors providing oversight and teams in each directorate reviewing and updating the plans as necessary.

The council can also set up an Emergency Control Centre to respond to incidents and coordinate if multiple council directorates are affected. The council undertakes planned exercises to assess how its plans would work, and reviews processes after each incident or exercise to improve them. It also takes part in regional exercises, and uses a Home Office recording and planning system, Resilience Direct, to respond to emergencies, which means that it is not reliant on council IT systems in case of a cyberattack. Paper copies of all plans are kept in case of power outages.

New Project Celebrating Disability

Suffolk Archives has received a grant of £139,107 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a new project called Beyond Labels: Celebrating Disability which aims to shine a light on the lives achievements and challenges of people with disabilities in Suffolk. Beyond Labels will collect and preserve personal stories - as well as the histories of organisations, schools, and charities that support disabled people - to create a record that celebrates disability while sparking conversations about inclusion, accessibility, and equality.

As part of the project, Suffolk Archives will work with local schools and community groups to offer free workshops that teach skills in recording, organising, and preserving archives. There will also be workshops around the county that provide opportunities for participants to co-create projects that amplify disabled voices and educate others about the challenges faced in daily life.

The project will also include cataloguing and selective digitisation of existing disability-related records, making them more accessible to the public and ensuring that Suffolk Archives reflects the diversity of the county. There will be a free public exhibition at The Hold in Ipswich which will run from February to May 2026 to celebrate the stories collected through the project and encourage greater awareness and empathy across Suffolk.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

At Cabinet on 4 November, it was agreed that the council would object to the Nation Grid's proposed Norwich to Tilbury grid reinforcement, which would see pylons and overhead electricity lines bisecting the county. Some undergrounding is planned in the Dedham Vale National Landscape area, with the council pressing for undergrounding in the Waveney valley too, and more generally objecting on the basis that offshore alternatives had not been fully explored, and that the grid reinforcement might not be necessary in the timescale asserted by National Grid Electricity Transmission.

The council is also concerned about the impacts of the project and its construction on the environment and residents of Suffolk, and the possibility that the new lines might lead to an increased number of solar farm applications and energy projects along the route which would have a cumulative effect on the local area.

The council is also objecting to the Sea Link project, whereby cables would make landfall between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness, with a new substation and energy infrastructure built at Friston near Saxmundham. The grounds for objection include inadequate road access, impact of the scheme on the local landscape and the proposals for a new bridge being 'disproportionate' and damaging to the environment and local heritage including Grade II listed buildings nearby.

New Year Active Travel Improvements for Sudbury

Melford Road will see new crossings and a shared-use pedestrian and cycle path installed. Work is to start in the New Year on a new walking, wheeling, and cycling route in Sudbury to help people to get around safely and sustainably.

The scheme in Melford Road will see the replacement of existing zebra crossings with parallel crossings, and installation of a shared-use off-road pedestrian and cycle facility, with cycle priority across side roads. Works are scheduled to begin in mid-January 2026 and are expected to be complete by the end of March 2026. To minimise disruption to the local community work will be undertaken in three phases.

- **Phase One:** This will require the **closure of the A131 northbound**, including Beaconsfield Road, and is expected to be around 25 days in duration.
- **Phase Two:** This will require the **closure of the A131 southbound**, including York Road. This phase will also take around 25 days.
- **Phase Three:** There will be a **full overnight closure of the A131 in both directions**, including Beaconsfield Road and York Road, to undertake resurfacing and install road markings. This closure is scheduled to be in place for three nights.

The exact dates of the scheme are still to be confirmed and will be communicated before works start, along with the duration of the closures and suggested diversion routes.

The project forms part of Suffolk's wider Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to deliver safer, greener routes across the county.

Investing in Creativity: Suffolk's Culture Project Fund Supports Young Artists at Gainsborough's House

Suffolk's young creatives are flourishing thanks to support from Suffolk County Council's Culture Project Fund, which continues to open doors for people to explore the arts and develop their talents. Among the many projects supported in the fund's first year is Gainsborough's House in Sudbury, where new initiatives are helping young people find confidence, community, and creative opportunity through art.

The £500,000 Culture Project Fund, launched by Suffolk County Council in 2024, aims to strengthen the county's cultural life by supporting projects that increase access to creativity for people of all ages and backgrounds. Gainsborough's House has used this support to deliver two major programmes: Pulling Prints and the National Saturday Club.

Pulling Prints, launched this September, is a free printmaking programme for young adults aged 18–25 who are not currently in formal arts education. Participants are gaining hands-on experience in the Gainsborough's House Print Workshop, guided by practising artists and supported by cultural partners including the Mill Tye Gallery. Over six months, the group is learning new printmaking techniques, developing personal and professional skills, and preparing for a final public exhibition to showcase their work.

Alongside this, the National Saturday Club continues to provide free weekly art workshops for 13–16-year-olds from Sudbury and surrounding areas. Young people explore creative processes, experiment with materials, and gain confidence through mentorship from professional artists. The club also offers opportunities beyond Suffolk, including national exhibitions and masterclasses with leading creative professionals.

Both programmes demonstrate how the Culture Project Fund is empowering communities through creativity, particularly those who might not otherwise have access to cultural opportunities. The success of these projects reflects the Culture Project Fund's wider mission to ensure that arts and culture are accessible to all, fostering wellbeing, confidence, and inclusion through creative engagement.

Applications for the 2026 Culture Project Fund are now open, with grants available for projects large and small. Community groups, museums, arts organisations, and freelancers are all encouraged to apply.

Find out more and apply at: www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund

Suffolk County Council continues to drive electric vehicle progress

Suffolk County Council recently welcomed Keir Mather MP, government Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation, to the county to show how the council is leading the way with electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure for its residents.

The county council continues to be one of the country's leading local authorities for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, under its Plug In Suffolk project.

Plug in Suffolk has grown considerably in recent years to provide more EV charging solutions to more Suffolk residents.

The council has long recognised the importance of this, not only to support the ever-growing number of Suffolk drivers who are switching to EVs, but also to benefit the county's visitors and the tourism economy.

The county council's latest EV charging solution is a trial of cross-pavement gullies. It is working with around 30 residents who do not have off-street parking to easily charge.

The trial has seen each homeowner have a gully installed across the pavement, allowing them to safely run a cable from their house, through the gully, to their car. The success of the project will be assessed in early 2026, to see if it can be rolled out further. Early indications are that it has proved popular.

The Plug In Suffolk project began nearly seven years ago, as the UK's first 'fully open' public fast charging network for electric vehicles, meaning drivers simply pay by contactless payment with no need to register their details. Around 100 of these chargepoints were installed in largely rural locations, such as community centres.

Following a successful bid in March 2024 to the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, the county council was awarded £5.3 million to install on-street chargepoints. It was the first local authority in England to both award their LEVI main funding tender, and subsequently sign a contract with an operator, *Believ*, who are providing a further £16 million of funding, meaning Suffolk will see 6,000 chargepoints installed.

After close work with district and borough councils, communities, *Believ*, and from a survey to residents last year, the first of these on-street installations is beginning this month (November 2025).

Personal message from Richard

As we approach the end of a challenging year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the strength and resilience of our wonderful community here in Suffolk.

This holiday season, we are reminded of the importance of kindness, togetherness, and support for one another. While 2025 has had its difficulties, we have shown time and time again that when we work together, we can overcome any obstacle. Whether through volunteering, supporting local businesses, or simply checking in on a neighbour, your efforts continue to make Suffolk a place to be proud of.

I'd like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has worked so hard this year to help others. It is through your dedication that we continue to move forward, stronger and more united.

As we celebrate the festive season, I encourage you to take time to rest, enjoy the company of loved ones, and reflect on the good things in life. May the new year bring you peace, good health, and happiness.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of Suffolk!

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Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/

Facebook - [Suffolk GLI - Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent Group | Facebook](#)

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