

October 2025

County Councillor's

Parish Report

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One Suffolk Business Case Approved at Council Meeting

On Tuesday 16 September, Suffolk County Council held an Extraordinary (additional) meeting to debate the business case produced by the council that one unitary council would be best for Suffolk after the two-tier system (county and district/borough councils) is abolished. Unitary councils run all services for a local area, and the government is planning for all remaining two-tier areas in the country to change to this model. Suffolk is part of the devolution priority programme, which means it will be one of the first counties to do so. The reorganization will also see the creation of a mayoral authority and mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk. The business case for One Suffolk was endorsed by the Conservative majority in the council meeting and was immediately afterwards tabled at a Cabinet meeting where the council's Cabinet voted to formally approve it. It will now be submitted to government by the end of September. An alternative proposal for three unitary councils for Suffolk has been developed by the district and borough councils and will also be submitted to government, who have said they will make a decision on the reorganization by March 2026 – this may be delayed though, as other parts have the process have been so far.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy Approved

On 9 September, the council's Cabinet voted to approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was produced following a public consultation on the draft strategy between April and June this year. The strategy sets out priority species and habitats for nature conservation in the county, and gives advice on how different habitats can be improved by landowners to protect and encourage nature. Most of the area mapped out for Suffolk's nature priorities is private farmland, and the strategy does not make improvement mandatory, but the officers who have produced the strategy will now work with landowners to support them and work to find investment for measures in the strategy. Landowners can use areas mapped in the strategy to produce 'units' of biodiversity for purchase by developers, as they will be required to meet the government's new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which state that all development should be increasing biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. The units of biodiversity do not need to be onsite or near the development.

The new strategy should also help Suffolk County Council to improve the land it owns in the county, and local planning authorities will have to take account of the strategy when development is considered. In the future, mayoral authorities like the one currently planned for Norfolk and Suffolk will be in charge of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their area.

The strategy will now be shared with neighbouring authorities, Natural England and local partners like district and borough councils and the Broads Authority for their feedback.

Financial Forecast at Quarter 1 of 2025-26 Financial Year

Cabinet on 9 September also considered the most recent financial reporting from the council, which aimed to give a better forecast of how the council's spending might look for 2025-26. The council is predicting that it will overspend by £13.3m by the end of the year, which it will balance by taking £13.3m from its Risk Reserve. This is extremely worrying, as is the prediction that the council's

Designated Schools Grant debt will rise over the year by £63.3m to a total of £161.2m deficit. Currently the government has agreed councils can hold this debt until March 2028, but a long term plan needs to be made as many councils are now carrying a level of debt related to SEND costs which would bankrupt them if it was called in by the government. Other cost pressures for the council include placements for children in care, care purchasing and mental health services in adult social care. The council has also received £1.2m less than expected from dividends from Suffolk Group Holdings (companies owned by the council like Concertus and Vertas) and had to pay nearly a million more than budgeted for its annual staff pay award.

Solar Together Scheme for 2025

The Solar Together Suffolk scheme, which has so far installed 32,000 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households, is now open for registration for 2025. Registering is free and there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation. The scheme also includes battery storage and EV charge points, and customer who have already invested in solar panels can get quotes for these too. The scheme requires householders to register online, and pre-approved solar PV suppliers then take part in a 'reverse auction' to bid for the work. After this, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which they can choose to accept or not. Telephone and email helpdesks are available to support residents in making an informed decision. The scheme is run by Suffolk's councils in partnership with iChoosr, who have been working with UK councils on the Solar Together scheme since 2015. For more information and to register, visit <https://solartogether.co.uk/suffolk/home>

Apply Now for a School Place for September 2026

Parents and carers can now apply for a place in the normal year of entry at a primary, infant or junior school and a secondary school for September 2026. The deadline for applications to secure a place at a secondary school is **Friday 31 October 2025** and for primary school places, including infant and junior schools, the deadline is **Thursday 15 January 2026**. All applications received by the relevant closing date are processed at the same time using the schools' oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications if necessary. Applications received late are processed after all of the applications received on time. Last year, 94% of applicants received offers for their first preference school, and 98.4% of applicants received an offer for one of their top three preferred schools. The council is keen that parents take into account how their child will travel to school when applying, as the nearest school for school transport purposes may not be the catchment area school. They can check this by entering their postcode here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-places/school-catchment-areas/nearest-school-checker>

Parents and carers can apply online for a school place here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-places>

Social Media and Helpful Links

Follow us on:

Twitter - [Suffolk Green, Lib Dem & Independent Group \(@SuffolkGLI\) / Twitter](#)

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 \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)

Cost of Living help and

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

fits 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/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

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