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Devolution – The new Government has announced that it is including Suffolk (and Norfolk) within the devolution priority programme. Other priority areas approved include Cumbria, Cheshire and Warrington, Essex, Hampshire and the Solent, Sussex and Brighton. Districts, boroughs and counties will be asked to reorganise into unitary authority areas with the election of a mayor (covering Suffolk and Norfolk) in May 2026. The mayor would control strategic programmes such as transport infrastructure, economic development, health improvement and blue light services. County Council elections in May 2025 will not go ahead, local councillors would be elected in 2026 to represent new unitary boundaries. Other points include:

1. The first mayor of Suffolk and Norfolk will be elected in May 2026. In the first instance, they will lead a Mayoral Combined County Authority – which will transition into a Mayoral Strategic Authority
2. SCC will now start work on a detailed business case for local government reorganisation in Suffolk which must be submitted by September 2025. An outline plan must be submitted in March 2025
3. The government has re-confirmed this week its preference that any new unitary authorities should serve communities of 500,000 or more
4. Capacity funding will be offered to help us prepare for establishing the new Combined County Authority with Norfolk County Council and prepare for mayoral elections in May 2026.

National Grid Pylon Scheme Public Consultation – NG briefed some councillors and SCC officers last Thursday about several proposed modifications to the pylon rout, these are apparently a result of the recent public consultation and affect the following areas directly:

Suffolk 1 – between Palgrave and Mellis

Suffolk 2 – east of Gislingham

There are also some changes affecting plans for undergrounding in the Waveney Valley in Suffolk and Norfolk but these were not final and we will be briefed about them shortly.

Consultation on these changes is open from **12:00 noon 30 January until 11:59 pm 3 March 2025**, with very short notice provided to stakeholders, parishes should have been notified. Webinars are being held 12th February at 12.00 noon and 13th February at 6.00 pm, joining instructions are below:

Information and links to sign up for a webinar are on – nationalgrid.com/norwich-to-tilbury

Norfolk - 11 February 2025 at 6:00 pm

Norfolk and Suffolk - 12 February 2025 at 12 noon

Suffolk - 13 February 2025 at 6:00 pm

Yaxley Battery Electric Storage Site, Yaxley - DC/24/05535 | Full Planning Application with Environmental Statement - Erection of a Battery Energy Storage System and associated infrastructure including access, drainage, landscaping and other incidental works. Please note that this proposal is within the high risk zone of a high pressure natural gas pipeline and is subject of a holding objection from National Gas Transmission PLT, it has also been referred to the Health and Safety Executive: *An assessment has been carried out with respect to National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus and the proposed work location. Based on the location entered into the system for assessment the area has been found to be within the High Risk zone from National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus and you **MUST NOT PROCEED** without further assessment from Asset Protection.*

Flood Workshop – Eye Airfield and Environs – Following an initial scoping meeting attended by Councillors and landowners as well as two representatives from the Waveney River Trust in early January, local councillors Fleming and Weller have met with officers from Suffolk County Council and Mid Suffolk District Council on 31st January to discuss topics raised at Thrandeston as well as wider flood and water management issues relating to

airfield area development both past and anticipated. The main outcome is general agreement that a Surface Water Management Plan might be appropriate to secure the coordinated approach needed as well as potential funding, and this would require the cooperation of several partner organisations. Actions arising to be discussed.

Budget Proposals - Suffolk County Council's proposed (draft) 2025/26 budget would rise by 6.7%, from £752.9 million in 2024/25 to £803.7 million in 2025/26 to meet current pressures. The budget was reviewed and approved by cabinet on 28th January and will be debated at full council on February 13th. Council taxes would rise by 4.99%.

New Bus Timetable – the new timetable for 2025 has been issued, there are some relatively minor adjustments in it and possibly more to come in the near future. A full list of bus timetable changes in Suffolk is on [Suffolkonboard](#).

Highways Issues – please do continue to report any highways or flood issues to the reporting web site in order to log the problem and enable a response, if a response is not satisfactory please contact me about it : <https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07714-597980 Twitter: @jesstfleming