

County Councillor Report



Parish Councils, February 2026

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County Elections and Local Government Reorganisation – The County Council has responded to a Ministerial invitation of 18th December to: *“set out your views on the postponement of your local election and if you consider this could release essential capacity to deliver local government reorganisation in your area and so allow reorganisation to progress effectively”*.

The Council debated its proposed response at a meeting of Full Council on 12th January followed by Cabinet endorsement and acknowledges that it is likely that there would be capacity pressures should local elections proceed in May alongside local government reorganization. A letter was submitted to the Minister’s question by the deadline of 15th January which acknowledges capacity pressures. A copy of the letter has been provided to the Parish Council separately.

Information about devolution and local government re-organisation can be found at Suffolk County Council’s web site: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Other dates include: March – Government will announce unitary government areas in Norfolk and Suffolk
Change Order Issued – July ‘26

Unitary Boundaries determined – May 2027 Unitary Elections

May 2028 – New authority comes into force with Mayoral Elections.

£26 million bus funding coming to Suffolk from DfT - Government funding for public transport in Suffolk is confirmed for three years. This funding will enable the continuation and expansion of new services introduced over the past two years through LABG support and its predecessor, the Bus Services Improvement Grant (BSIP), many of which were shaped by community feedback.

EcoPower Solar – The approx. 600-ha proposal includes installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and co-located ‘Battery Energy Storage System’ (BESS) with an anticipated generating capacity of over 100 megawatts (MW), and grid connection infrastructure. The Proposed Developments are mainly on agricultural land in the parishes of Yaxley, Brome, Eye, Gislingham, Mellis and Occold. The Proposal is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Relevant information can be found on the [Planning Inspectorate \(PINS\)](#) and [Applicant's \(Econergy\)](#) websites. EIA Scoping Report Part 1. pages 1-32 provide an overview and figures. The purpose of scoping is to propose and agree key environmental issues to be covered in the Environmental Impact Assessment. The deadline for response is 23rd February.

Suffolk County Council’s scoping response is at: [EcoPower Suffolk - Suffolk County Council](#)

National Grid – Preliminary Meetings for the above application (the ‘Rule 6’ letter) being scheduled, there is a meeting for ‘interested parties’ on Tuesday 10 February 2026 at 10:00 in The Sir Bobby Robson Suite at Ipswich Town Football Club, Portman Road, Ipswich, IP1 2DA and virtually via Microsoft Teams. Additional meetings are planned throughout that week in Ipswich. Access to meetings is also available on Teams.

New Reservoir, Thrandeston or Eye Area– Essex & Suffolk Water’s proposal is ongoing to construct a new drinking water storage reservoir (large concrete storage tank) and other water supply facilities in the area of Thrandeston and/ or Eye. Potential locations are currently under consideration. A second reservoir is planned near Sipton as part of a wider project to bring treated wastewater water to the area and to Sizewell C from Lowestoft. Refer to <https://suffolkwaternetnetwork.co.uk/>

Budget Setting for ‘26/’27 - The Council’s budget is around £850,000,000. To support its obligations the council is proposing a 4.99% rise in Council Tax (2.99% general and 2% for adult care.) Alongside a forecast 1% rise in the taxbase, this would generate an additional £27.4 million. Key themes:

- **Savings and efficiencies:** £46.5 million of efficiencies, such as temporary reduction in employer pension contributions.
- **Rising financial pressures:** Increasing demand, in particular for adult and children’s social care, will add £32.2 million in costs, alongside continued pressures from the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit.
- **Reserves:** A one-off use of reserves will bridge a £5.9 million funding gap, while keeping reserves above the minimum level needed to manage financial risks.
- **Capital investment:** The capital programme has been shortened from four years to three ahead of anticipated local government reorganisation in 2028. It funds projects such as school expansion, infrastructure upgrades, improvements to bus services, public rights of way, and cycling and walking infrastructure.

The final budget comes to Full Council for agreement on Thursday 12th February.

Bird Flu – Sadly, outbreaks continue in Suffolk. DEFRA’s Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) has imposed restrictions on the premises. Information on the locations of outbreaks can be found at: [APHA Interactive Avian Influenza Disease Map](#) SCC Trading Standards is managing controls. Two premises have been affected in the Bacton area with the outer surveillance zone extending into Mellis - [Bird flu: second premises near Bacton, Mid Suffolk, Suffolk \(AIV2026/10\) - GOV.UK](#)

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk *The final budget will be agreed by all county councillors at a Full Council meeting on Thursday 12 February 2026* Tel: 07714-597980 Twitter: @jesstfleming