

## County Councillor Report - Parish Councils, March 2026



Councillor Jessica Fleming, Hartismere Division. Tel. 07714-597980

[Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk)

**County Elections and Local Government Reorganisation** – The Government has abandoned plans to delay 30 local council elections in England after receiving legal advice that the move could be unlawful. Local Government Secretary Steve Reed had previously approved postponing the ballots until 2027, citing concerns about capacity during a major reorganisation of local government. Local County elections will now take place on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

Other proposals and dates include:

Mid. March – Government will announce unitary government areas in Norfolk and Suffolk

Structural Change Order Issued covering dissolution of the County Council – July '26

Unitary Boundaries determined with new unitary councillor elections – May 2027

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

**Retirement of Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk Lady Clare Countess of Euston** - Lady Clare retires on April 15<sup>th</sup> after 12 years in this role. She will be succeeded by Mark Pendlington. The Lord Lieutenant plays a civic or ceremonial role in the County as the representative of the reigning monarch at important events such as citizenship, church services and the granting of national honours and awards. Lady Clare will be attending Full Council on the 19<sup>th</sup> March to give her Thought for the Day on what is likely to be the last Full Council meeting before local elections in May.

**National Grid Norwich to Tilbury Examination** – Open Floor Hearings have been taking place to include comments and compulsory purchase across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. SCC representatives gave evidence on Tuesday 10 February at Ipswich Town Football Club. Transcripts are available on the Planning Inspectorate's website : [Norwich to Tilbury - Project information](#)

If anyone did not register to have a say you can still request to be an interested party. Contact the project team which will ask the Examining Authority if you can register as an interested party and comment - email [NorwichToTilbury@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:NorwichToTilbury@planninginspectorate.gov.uk) with your request.

**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 & agree key environmental issues to be covered in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

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

**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 Sibton as part of a wider project to bring treated wastewater water to the area and to Sizewell C from Lowestoft. Refer to <https://suffolkwaternetwork.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 & efficiencies:** £46.5 million of efficiencies, e.g. 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 was approved at Full Council on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February.

The Council's last full council meeting before the May elections is on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

**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.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments:

[Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk) Tel: 07714-597980 Twitter: @jesstfleming