

County Councillor Report



Parish Councils, February 2025

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Devolution – Suffolk and Norfolk are included in the new Government’s devolution priority programme. Other priority areas 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, under the Government’s proposals local councillors would extend their time in office by one year 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.

Large Scale Solar Proposals – Two large (NSIP) solar proposals are at early stages in the local area currently, these are: Elmya north of Mendlesham (675 acres) with public consultation expected shortly <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects-including-nsips/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-nsips/white-elm-solar-farm> and EcoPower around Yaxley/ Mellis/Eye around 1500 acres) at very early stage - <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/suffolk-prepares-for-another-significant-solar-farm-proposal>

National Grid Pylon Scheme Public Consultation – NG briefed some councillors and SCC officers last Thursday about several proposed modifications to the pylon route, 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 which may make this unviable but we will be briefed about them shortly.

Information is available on – nationalgrid.com/norwich-to-tilbury

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. Refer to Field Yaxley - planning reference [DC/24/05535](#).*

Budget Proposals - Suffolk County Council's) 2025/26 budget has risen by 6.7%, from £752.9 million in 2024/25 to £803.7 million in 2025/26 to meet current pressures. The budget was approved by cabinet on 28th January and 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](#).

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk
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