

## County Councillor Report



### Parish Councils, January 2025

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**Devolution** – The new Government issued its [English Devolution White Paper](#) on 16<sup>th</sup> December. Suffolk has at the same time received a letter request from the Minister for Local Government, Jim McMahon, inviting the council to express interest in joining the Devolution Priority Programme by 10<sup>th</sup> January. A vote was taken and passed at an extraordinary meeting of full council on January 9<sup>th</sup> followed by validation by cabinet. A letter has been sent to the minister responding positively to his requests. We expect to hear back within the next two weeks.

Acceptance of the invitation implies a clear commitment to deliver local authority reorganisation – that is - forming a unitary authority within a Mayoral Authority Area (in our case Norfolk and Suffolk). As part of this commitment the Council is also asked to agree to postpone the 2025 County Council elections. A link to the agenda and papers for the Meeting follows: [Extraordinary Meeting of County Council - 9 January 2025](#)

It is also noted that the Minister has stated his intent to introduce devolution and mayoral authorities throughout England, and that failure to endorse the current proposal would not imply that devolution would be avoided in the future.

Norfolk County Council has endorsed the proposal the same day.

Any unitary authority would have a minimum population of 500,000 residents.

Public engagement about local government reorganisation and establishment of mayoral authorities would follow and, as we understand, would be Government led (details to be clarified).

**New Bus Timetable** – the new timetable for 2025 has been issued, there are some relatively minor adjustments in it. a full list of all upcoming bus timetable changes in Suffolk, visit [Suffolkonboard](#).

**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. The budget will be debated at full council in February. Key allocations include:

- £18.1 million extra for children's services
- £35.2 million extra for adult care, aimed at addressing increased demand for care services.

A 4.99% rise in Council Tax is also proposed consisting of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and an additional 2% specifically for adult care services. This means the costs for a household would be:

- Band B property: £24.67 per week, a £1.17 increase from 2024-25  
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- Band D property: £31.72 per week, a £1.51 increase from 2024-25.

**Civil Airport Authority told to close Airfield Advisory Team** - The CAA has been told by the Department for Transport to close down its Airfield Advisory Team which would not be available to provide advice to planning officers or inspectors after March 2025.

The AAT has helped shape improvements to infrastructure projects including the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, wind turbines and solar farms. Without advice from this team, it will be more difficult for planning officers to comment on new proposals; independent scrutiny of the effects of new infrastructure on commercial and recreational air operations across Suffolk and regionally will be reduced. SCC has written to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, to review the proposal. Suffolk County Council's letter to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, can be read on [suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

**Suffolk is seeking a new Armed Forces Commissioner** - The successful candidate will play a key role in supporting the UK Armed Forces community in the county for a three-year period from mid-March 2025. This voluntary, non-political role includes chairing the Suffolk Armed Forces Covenant Board, set up by Suffolk County Council and partners to ensure that military or ex military personnel and their families, are treated fairly.

Applicants must be able to volunteer 16 days (split into 32 half days) of their time in total each year, it is not a prerequisite to have directly served in the UK Armed Forces but a keen interest would be expected. Applications for the voluntary position will be accepted until 5pm on Friday 17th January 2025, to enable the successful candidate to start their three-year appointment in mid-March 2025.

Further information on the vacancy, application process and Suffolk's Armed Forces Covenant can be found at: [www.suffolkmilitarycovenant.org.uk](https://www.suffolkmilitarycovenant.org.uk)

**Highways Issues** – please do 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/>

Happy New Year to everyone.

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