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October 2025 Town and Parish Newsletter

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To promote and support the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk



To strengthen our local economy



To provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer



To protect and enhance our environment



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Suffolk Business Board backs devolution as catalyst for growth

The letter outlines the Board's strong belief that devolution will empower local leadership, attract significant investment and drive economic growth across the region.

Suffolk's £21 billion economy is among the best-connected in the UK, home to globally recognised businesses and thousands of ambitious enterprises. The Suffolk Business Board,



comprising leaders from key sectors across the region, is spearheading a new economic strategy aimed at accelerating inward investment, job creation and skills development.

The letter states:

“The ambitions and opportunities business can deliver needs the active support of a streamlined governance structure that can help create the conditions for growth. Which is why, as local business leaders, we endorse the proposal to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk – a transformative opportunity to unlock growth, give more power and decision-making authority to local people and shape a more prosperous future for our region.”

The letter highlights the benefits of devolution, including local decision-making, guaranteed long-term funding and greater influence at the national level.

“Devolution means decisions made closer to home, by people who understand our local strengths, challenges and ambitions and want to help make things happen. It offers the opportunity to create high-quality jobs, attract long-term investment – including for vital improvements to infrastructure – and transform the delivery of public services in a way that reflects Suffolk’s unique character and needs.”

The Suffolk Business Board stresses that a directly elected mayor would provide strategic leadership and accountability to deliver on key priorities such as regenerating Ipswich, expanding clean energy innovation in East Suffolk, and growing the region’s digital and technology sectors.

The letter also underscores the successful track record of collaboration between Suffolk and Norfolk, which has already attracted over £1.3 billion in investment and created and safeguarded more than 15,300 new jobs in recent years.

Read the full letter:

- [Open letter from the Suffolk Business Board](#)

Councillors approve historic devolution deal, paving the way for major investment for Suffolk

Suffolk County Council’s cabinet has voted in favour of creating a new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk - which will bring £1 billion to the counties in the next 30 years - following overwhelming support from councillors earlier today (Thursday 2 October). The new mayoral combined county authority (MCCA) would have access to a starting annual investment fund of £37.4 million - funded by the government. This is in addition to devolved funding from Whitehall to deliver public services.

The investment fund would enable the new mayor to support a wide range of long-term, locally-driven projects that will boost economic growth, improve infrastructure and enhance



the quality of life for residents. This could include transport infrastructure, housing and education and skills.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said:

"For too long, Suffolk, and indeed Norfolk, has been a devolution desert. Alongside local government reorganisation, this gives us a rare opportunity to reshape governance, improve the lives of our residents, and ensure that Suffolk has the strong, unified voice it needs – and deserves – on the national stage.

"Two weeks ago, we discussed our proposal for One Suffolk, a single unitary authority for our county. This sustainable model, effective delivery and credible voice is precisely what One Suffolk would deliver. It would be smarter simpler and better. It would be a strong voice for our county. And it would be the most effective partner for the new mayor.

"Through both devolution and local government reorganisation, we are re-shaping local governance in our county. We are setting up Suffolk for future prosperity and growth, and we are giving Suffolk that single, loud voice so that it can no longer be overlooked by those in Westminster."

The proposal to establish an MCCA received overwhelming backing by councillors at the full council meeting – with 98% voting in favour of the motion.

Speaking during the full council meeting, Cllr Matthew Hicks, Suffolk County Council's leader, said:

"This is a historic day. The scale and the impact of the decisions we make as a Cabinet is often significant – but there is something truly significant about today's decision – that has the potential to be transformative for some 1.7 million residents in Suffolk and Norfolk.

"We have a unique deal on the table – one which binds devolution with an even bigger change in the form of local government reorganisation – to which we gave our strong backing just two weeks ago.

"By supporting this proposal, we are taking a bold step towards a brighter future for Suffolk and Norfolk."

In the future, Suffolk and Norfolk will be able to access multi-year, cross government funding that would enhance the investment fund and enable better tailoring of that money to benefit local needs and opportunities.

Earlier this week the Suffolk Business Board gave its endorsement to the proposal to create an MCCA, calling it a 'transformative opportunity to unlock growth'.

The Business Board, comprising leaders from key sectors across the region, is spearheading a new economic strategy aimed at accelerating inward investment, job creation and skills development.



Suffolk is one of six areas on the devolution priority programme. Alongside local government reorganisation, devolution will bring in the biggest change to local government for over 50 years.

The next step in the devolution process will be for councillors at Norfolk County Council to vote on the proposal on Thursday 16 October. If they consent, government will formally lay a Statutory Instrument, enabling the MCCA to be formed.

Elections for the new mayor would then be held in May 2026.

You can watch the cabinet meeting on YouTube

at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMpJrEQcU0w>

Courage, commitment and community impact celebrated at Suffolk Fire and Rescue Awards

The ceremony was attended by over 200 people, including award recipients and their guests, the SFRS ceremonial team and the following senior dignitaries who presented the awards:

- The High Sheriff of Suffolk, Gulshan Kayembe
- His Majesty's Deputy Lord-Lieutenant for Suffolk, Edward Creasy
- Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, Councillor Steve Wiles
- Chairman of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Jessica Fleming
- Chief Resilience Officer, Suffolk Resilience Forum, Becky Heginbotham-Blount

More than 40 individuals and nine teams received awards recognising the professionalism, dedication and teamwork that underpin community safety and resilience across Suffolk. Recipients included wholetime and on-call firefighters, volunteers, professional support staff, Trading Standards colleagues, emergency planning partners and members of the public.

Cllr Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection said:

"This evening reminds us of the incredible dedication shown by everyone who works to keep Suffolk safe. From firefighters and Trading Standards colleagues, to volunteers, members of the public, and our emergency planning partners who work to ensure emergency preparedness, their efforts make a real difference to communities across the county."

Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey, who presented seven awards on the night as well as The Chief Fire Officer Commendation, **added**:



“I am proud to see so many deserving individuals being acknowledged for their hard work and dedication. Without them, and all those whose incredible work was not rewarded this evening but whose contributions are every bit as valued, Suffolk would not be as safe and resilient as it is today.”

The evening also included a poignant moment of reflection, with a minute’s silence held in honour of friends and colleagues who have passed, including Oxfordshire firefighters Jenny Logan and Martyn Sadler, who tragically lost their lives at the Bicester incident in May this year.

The ceremony was sponsored by SFRS suppliers Motorola Solutions, Emergency One, Delta Fire and HaloITSM.

The event also provided an opportunity to raise funds for charities supported by Cllr Jessica Fleming, Chairman of Suffolk County Council:

- **YANA (You Are Not Alone):** supports those in agriculture and other rural businesses affected by stress or depression.
- **SMART (Suffolk Music and Arts Alumni Trust):** helps young people in the county access high-quality music and arts opportunities to enrich their lives.

Money was also raised for the Fire Fighters Charity, which provides mental, physical and social support to those who work in the fire and rescue sector, and their families.

To view all of the photos from the evening, visit: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCvXPJ>

The complete list of award recipients:

- **Cabinet Member Awards for Team Achievement:** The Prevention Team, SFRS and The Imports Team, Trading Standards
- **Cabinet Member Award for Volunteer of the Year:** Sharon Buckmaster, (Volunteer, SFRS)
- **Excellence in Community Safety Award:** Claire Watkins (Youth Education and Development Manager, SFRS)
- **The Alan Soards Award for Best Fire Station:** Halesworth Fire Station
- **Miles Hammond Trophy** (for excellence demonstrated during an emergency incident): Paul Davies and the Newmarket On-Call Crew
- **Derek Northey Trophy** (for most significant contribution to The Fire Fighters Charity): Clare Fire Station
- **Paul Proctor Award** (for outstanding professional contribution): Zoe Rogers (Wellbeing Officer, SFRS who was unable to attend) and Luke Wilkinson (Crew Manager, County Day Crew)
- **Award for Recruit of the Year:** Laura Grinsted (Firefighter)
- **Award for Most Improved On-Call Station:** Wrentham Fire Station
- **Award for Excellence in Multi-Agency Working:** Roxy Smith (Safeguarding Manager, Prevention)
- **Suffolk Women in Fire Together (SWIFT) Award:** Suffolk Fire Control

- **Lifetime Achievement Awards:** Martyn Hazelwood (Watch Manager, Recruitment) for 43 years' service and Dave Tingey (retired owner of Electrical Safety Assessments Ltd) for 30 years' supporting Trading Standards in Suffolk
- **Suffolk Resilience Forum Outstanding Multi-Agency Collaboration Award:** Julian Bosley (Emergency Planning Officer, Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies)
- **Suffolk Resilience Forum Excellence in Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response Award:** Chris Chapman (EPRR Manager, Suffolk and Norfolk East Essex Integrated Care Board)
- **Certificates of Merit:** Michael Arrand (member of the public); Stephen Hobbs; Joseph Hobbs; Jack Lord (Cadent Gas engineers); Gary Lee (Firefighter); Lee Nunn (Senior Trading Standards Officer and Accredited Financial Investigator, Trading Standards); Jonathan Pratt (Facilities Manager, Norse Group); Kelvin Todd (SFRS Workshop Manager); Luke Wright (Crew Manager); John Glendinning (SFRS Mechanic); Chris Baker, Harry O'Sullivan, Meg Thewlis (SFRS Project Support Team); SFRS Fire Supplies and Technical Services and Sudbury Fire Station
- **Certificates of Long Service (Trading Standards):** 20 Years – Lee Nunn (Senior Trading Standards Officer and Accredited Financial Investigator) and Sasha Watson (Community Engagement Officer); 40 Years – Kevin Edwards (Business Support Manager)
- **His Majesty's King's Long Service and Good Conduct Medals & Clasps:** 20-Year Medals – John Bartrum (Watch Manager, Organisational Assurance), Erica Brewer (Watch Manager, Control), Paul Buck (On-Call Firefighter), Neil Godbold (Watch Manager), Peter Grant (On-Call Firefighter), Andrew Jackson (Group Manager, Response North District and Waste Fire Tactical Advisor), David Munnings (On-Call Firefighter) and Mark Proctor (Firefighter); 30-Year Clasps – Sally Hammond (retired Group Manager, Head of Protection and Prevention) and Neil Jacobs (On-Call Firefighter)
- **Chief Fire Officer Commendations:** Control Project Support Team, including Motorola Solutions, Boot Construction, and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Unable to attend but also awarded: Certificates of Merit - Jason Folkard (Crew Manager), Becca Grey (Trading Standards Officer), Paul Kerridge (Crew Manager) and Lucy Witherick (SFRS Project Support Team); Lifetime Achievement Award – Paul Kerridge (Firefighter) for 41 years' service; Certificates of Long Service (Trading Standards) - Alexis Winch (Trading Standards Officer); Long Service and Good Conduct Medals (20 years) - Stephen Bastiani (Firefighter) and Paul Young (Watch Manager); 30-Year Clasp - David Ellard (Crew Manager)

Suffolk's recycling centres raise half a million pounds for charity

The Benjamin Foundation, which operates re-use shops at Suffolk's recycling centres in Bury St Edmunds and Foxhall, is benefitting from the money to provide local families with childcare, mental health, youth, family and housing support services.

The half-million-pound milestone came during the national Second Hand September campaign this year, with people pledging not to buy anything new during the month.



**“The relationship between The Benjamin Foundation and the county council’s recycling centres is helping us to protect the environment, but also supporting people too”
Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste**

A key part of this success story is the repair and resale of white goods. They are collected at Suffolk’s recycling centres, repaired by The Benjamin Foundation’s skilled technicians and sold in their charity shops, giving them a second life and helping families access affordable appliances.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste, said:

“Suffolk continues to lead the way in sustainable waste management, and the relationship between The Benjamin Foundation and the county council’s recycling centres is helping us to protect the environment, but also supporting people too.

“It’s heartening to know that every fridge repaired and resold directly supports local young people and their families through The Benjamin Foundation’s vital services – helping them to be safe, become independent and thrive throughout their life.”

The first re-use shop opened at Foxhall recycling centre in 2016, followed by one in Bury St Edmunds in 2020.

To date, the initiative has sold over 603,000 items, generating over £530,000, with over 300 white goods sent for repair, contributing to a CO₂ saving of 8,736 kg - the equivalent of powering two family homes for a year.

Gemma Green, Reuse Development Manager for Suffolk Recycling Centres, said:

“It’s amazing how much the repair of white goods can impact our carbon footprint, but also go on to help families that might find it difficult to afford brand new appliances.”

“Although we had a successful Second Hand September, residents are invited to donate reusable items at any time. You don’t need to book a slot to visit or donate at either of the charity re-use shops, and they are open year-round.”

For more information about Suffolk’s recycling centres and re-use shops, visit www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk

Celebrating our Kinship Carers - Family or friends who step up to raise a child

Corporate Parenting - supporting the children in our care to thrive - in my view, is the most important thing we do as councillors.



In Suffolk, our ambition is to be a fostering service that truly listens. In my time as Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's services, a priority for me has been really getting to know our foster families – not just to hear them but to listen, and to do all I can in my role to make their experiences better.

This week is Kinship Care week, a chance to recognise and celebrate our Kinship Carers, who step up in extraordinary ways to keep children connected to their families, roots and communities.

Kinship care is when someone with a family connection steps up to care for a child when their parents aren't able to. Kinship Carers might be grandparents, aunts or uncles, brothers or sisters, a step-parent, stepbrother or stepsister, or someone who isn't related but knows the child well.

Whatever their relationship to the child, in that moment a commitment is made. To bring love and hope to a child who has experienced trauma, no matter what.

Kinship Foster Carers have a different start to their fostering journey compared with mainstream foster carers. Rarely do Kinship Foster Carers have the time and space to consider their decision regarding becoming a foster carer, as varied and complex, or unexpected circumstances may lead them into this role. The focus of Kinship Care is on the child remaining within their family, and this can come with complexities and challenges.

I have so much time for our Kinship Carers who take on this extraordinary responsibility, at what can often be a very intense time.

I'm always keen to take every opportunity I can to hear from our foster carers, kinship carers, and adopters, and I have heard some very powerful examples of the enormous undertaking our Kinship carers take on. Hearing these stories first-hand, really drives home the huge impact that taking on the responsibility of Kinship Care can have on health and wellbeing, family relationships, work, and other areas of day-to-day life, all while ensuring their child feels safe and loved.

Kinship Care is complex and brings with it its own set of unique needs. Here in Suffolk, our Kinship Team provide bespoke training, home visits, advice and support to Kinship Carers. When an assessment for Fostering or a Special Guardianship Order is the most appropriate way forward, our team help to guide carers through what can often be a difficult and challenging assessment and court process.

We have recently developed our 'Kinship Local Offer' which recognises not only the support available from the Kinship Team and Suffolk County Council, but also helps Kinship Carers to navigate their way to support from our partners and voluntary agencies, all of whom are key to providing the support Kinship Carers may need to ensure they are best placed to ensure their own well-being but also meet the needs of the vulnerable children they care for.

Kinship Care week is a time for us to recognise and celebrate the extraordinary people in children's lives that step forward and care for a child when their own parents are unable to



care for them. To all our Kinship Cares who take on this extraordinary responsibility, I want to say, Thank you.

If you need support or advice about Kinship Care, please contact Suffolk County Council's Kinship Team on 01473 265025.

Tom's race with new foster carers

What started as a small local project in the Midlands is now a major nationwide campaign involving over 90 local authority fostering services, project managed by CAN Digital. 'The Run' is set to be the most ambitious jointly funded fostering film project yet.

The film focuses on Tom, an 11-year-old boy, contrasting his need to run - away from danger, a chaotic home life, to get to school in time for breakfast club because he's hungry - with running as a sport.

Despite the disadvantages Tom faces before being fostered – not even having PE kit for school – he's good at running and the film climaxes with Tom taking part in an athletics tournament, running in a stadium, with the support of his new foster family. It's Tom's chance to shine. Can Tom win his race? On the track and in his life?

"The message of this project is very simple, but so important – we need foster carers and we need people to foster for Suffolk County Council."

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's services

Cllr Bennett continues: "This sentiment applies across the country, which is why this project has grown into a national campaign. 'The Run' is a brilliant, emotional film none of us could have produced on our own, which is why this partnership is so important.

"We have an engaging, high-quality film – which is great for all of us – but the message is loud and clear; there's an urgent need for more foster carers to step forward across the country. Here in Suffolk, we need foster carers who can give the gift of time by offering a long-term, loving home to children in care."

That message is at the core of the film project. Local authority fostering services are under pressure like never before as more children need a safe, stable home. This is combined with increased competition from independent fostering agencies to recruit foster carers.

The film's project director Rachel Brown explains;

"This whole project grew out of the constant struggle to recruit foster carers, when you have limited resources. By working as a group – which has grown from 12 to over 90 councils across the country – we've found a way to raise our voice and shout.

"I say shout quite deliberately - because this is a national emergency. Make no mistake, children's futures depend on having homes to give them a supportive, nurturing upbringing.



"‘The Run’ won’t change things on its own, but we hope that everyone who sees it, will at least pause for thought, hopefully stepping forward to help our most vulnerable children and young people.”

One thing is for sure, there are children like Tom all over the country. Here in Suffolk, if you want to make a difference talk, to Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service on 01473 264800 or make an enquiry at www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk

Watch ‘The Run’ here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKNFmljDYQA&t=61s>

Suffolk Fire and Rescue highlights mental health support on World Mental Health Day

This year’s theme, Access to Services: Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies, highlights how vital it is for frontline responders to have the right support in place when dealing with challenging incidents.

Blue light responders, from the control room to the incident ground routinely face demanding and emotionally charged situations. SFRS recognises the importance of ensuring that everyone has access to practical, confidential, and timely mental health support.

Acknowledging these risks, **Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Henry Griffin outlined SFRS’s approach to supporting staff wellbeing:**

“Firefighters and blue light staff often experience situations that can be emotionally taxing. At SFRS, we take staff wellbeing extremely seriously, not just during major incidents but every day.

“We want every member of our service to know that support is available whenever it’s needed, and that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.”

Reflecting this priority, SFRS offers access to a comprehensive range of support services, including:

- Mental Health First Aiders offering peer-to-peer guidance
- Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) for structured debriefs, counselling, and follow-up support after traumatic incidents (firefighters and control room staff)
- Peer support networks and union representatives for confidential conversations and signposting
- The Fire Fighters Charity, which delivers programmes to promote mental health, resilience, and overall wellbeing, including counselling, practical support, and wellbeing workshops

Reflecting on mental health challenges across the community, **Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, Councillor Steve Wiles, said:**



“World Mental Health Day is a reminder that everyone’s mental health matters, whether responding to an emergency or coping with everyday pressures. Taking time to offload by sharing your feelings with a colleague, someone outside of work, or a trained counsellor, doing something you enjoy, or getting out into nature can all make a difference.

“Reaching out for support isn’t something to be ashamed of - it’s one of the most sensible steps you can take to safeguard your own wellbeing and your relationships with others.” SFRS is also sharing practical guidance from the Mental Health Foundation about how to manage stress and emotional overload during global events and relentless negative news. This includes setting boundaries, having phone-free time, living in the moment, focusing on what you can control and giving yourself permission to rest.

Members of the public experiencing mental health challenges can access local support through:

- Suffolk Mind – 01473 400785, www.suffolkmind.org.uk
- Wellbeing Suffolk – 0300 123 1503, www.wellbeingnands.co.uk

Margaret Catchpole letters on show in the UK for the first time

On loan from the National Library of Australia, and the State Library of New South Wales, the letters form the centrepiece of Suffolk Archives’ latest exhibition *Behind Bars - Suffolk’s Criminal Past*.

Servant girl turned notorious horse thief, Margaret’s daring escape from Ipswich jail, her capture, and eventual transportation to Australia made her a Suffolk legend.

As well as telling Margaret’s story, *Behind Bars* lifts the lid on Suffolk’s lawless past. Discover gripping true crimes from the infamous Red Barn Murder that shocked the nation to the curious case of the Acton Dumpling Murderess. Step inside the world of historic investigations and harsh punishments, including Suffolk’s last public execution.

Explore how justice has evolved, from dealing with riots and social unrest to the development of prisons and rehabilitation, supported by HMP Hollesley Bay. In partnership with Suffolk Constabulary, the exhibition also traces the history of policing in the county and how officers continue to keep Suffolk safe today.

Cllr Nadia Cenci, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Communities said:

"It’s wonderful to welcome Margaret Catchpole’s letters back to Suffolk, where her extraordinary story began. ‘Behind Bars’ shines a light on her courage and our county’s rich, and sometimes lawless, past. We’re proud to host this fascinating exhibition celebrating Suffolk’s unique history and heritage."



Behind Bars is a free exhibition and runs from 24 October 2025 to 17 January 2026 at The Hold in Ipswich, the home of Suffolk Archives, a Suffolk County Council service. The exhibition is accompanied by a series of talks, walks, and workshops. Visit suffolkarchives.co.uk for more information.

OPINION: Help shape next year's budget

As Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for finance, I want to invite you to help shape our budget for 2026/27.

Each year, the council faces difficult choices about how to spend public money – funding used for everything from keeping our roads safe to providing support for vulnerable children and adults who rely on social care.

These services touch thousands of lives across the county, every single day. We know times are tough for many, and the same is true for councils across the country. Demand for our services keeps growing, while costs continue to rise. Yet again, we face hard choices about how to make limited resources stretch further. That's why your input matters.

Our 2026/27 budget consultation is now open, and it takes just a few minutes to complete. Please visit www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget2026-27 to share your thoughts.

The consultation explains how the council manages its finances, the cost-saving measures already in place and the different ways we can generate additional income to support essential services.

We want to know:

1. What council services have you used in the past year?
2. To what extent would you support a rise in Council Tax?
3. What should we prioritise when setting the budget?

These are simple questions, but they go to the heart of how we plan for the future. Looking ahead, Suffolk is preparing for an important change: local government reorganisation. Our preferred model is to have just one council in Suffolk delivering all services countywide. We argue that simpler, more joined-up services would bring long-term savings – which could be reinvested in those services.

However, reorganisation will take time, and it doesn't change the challenges we face today. For now, we must continue to manage our budget responsibly to keep delivering essential services.

This year, we have budgeted to spend £805 million. While this sounds like a vast sum, of every pound, 77 pence goes directly to adult social care, children's services and public health – crucial support for some of the county's most vulnerable people. The remaining 23



pence covers everything else, including fire and rescue, highways, public transport, waste management and the essential infrastructure that keeps the council running.

Many of these services are required by law. We can't stop maintaining the roads or supporting vulnerable people. But we must keep finding better ways of delivering those services, making sure every pound is used wisely. We've worked hard over the years to innovate, make efficiencies and protect front-line services.

In recent times, we've also used our financial reserves to help manage unexpected pressures. But our reserves are limited, and once spent, they're gone.

Alongside careful budget management, we continue to lobby the government for fairer funding that reflects Suffolk's growing needs. We push for investment that keeps pace with demand and inflation, so we can maintain and improve the services you rely on.

One of the few levers we control locally is Council Tax. Increasing it would provide more money to support the services we deliver. But we recognise the pressure households are under, and that's why your feedback is so important before any decisions are made.

Every budget decision we take has real-world consequences – for schools, care homes, road safety and environmental projects that improve our quality of life. Without enough funding, some services might need to be delivered differently. Your views help us understand the impact and set the right priorities.

Whether you use council services every day or only occasionally, we want to hear from you. All responses will be considered alongside input from local businesses, public sector partners, elected councillors and council officers as we shape the budget for 2026/27. The consultation is open for six weeks and closes on Tuesday 25 November.

Please share your thoughts today at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget2026-27

Deadline approaching for secondary school places in Suffolk

This applies to children joining secondary school in the normal year of entry (Year 7). Applying after the closing date significantly reduces a child's chances of getting a place at their preferred school.

Last year, Suffolk County Council received 7,831 on-time applications from parents and carers indicating which secondary school they would prefer their child to be educated at from September 2025 in Year 7. Of these, 92% of applicants received an offer for their first preference school and 97.5% of applicants received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

"It is important for parents and carers to complete and submit their application by the closing date of 31 October 2025 as this will give them the best chance of securing a place at one of their preferred schools. Parents and carers should carefully consider which



secondary schools to apply for on behalf of their child. We recommend that they apply for more than one school, and up to three schools can be listed on the application.”

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Education and SEND

A completed application must be submitted for every child requiring a Year 7 place at a secondary school. For families who are planning to move house or think their circumstances may change before next September, it is still important to make an application on time using the child’s current address. Further information to help parents and carers with this process is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.

Parents and carers should apply online as they will receive an email confirming that their application has been received. If they are unable to apply online, they should complete a paper application (CAF1). It is suggested parents and carers obtain proof of postage as these cannot be acknowledged.

Before making a school application, parents and carers need to carefully consider how they will get their child to and from school. Children are eligible for school travel if they attend their nearest suitable school with a place available and meet the distance criteria. This might not be the catchment area school. To find out more about SCC’s School Travel Policy please visit www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel.

Families who apply online will be able to log on to the Online Service on National Offer Day (Monday 2 March 2026) to see their offer of a school place. An email confirmation will also be sent on the day. For those who completed paper applications, offer letters will be sent out by second class post on National Offer Day.

Applications can be made at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions, where further advice and guidance is also available.

Suffolk partners with Ukrainian region of Poltava

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed today (15 October 2025) at the XR Lab at West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds by Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, and Volodymyr Kohut, Head of the Poltava Administration.

The agreement strengthens ties between the two regions and establishes a framework for meaningful collaboration across a wide range of sectors, including:

- Economic development
- Education, including partnerships with agricultural and nursing colleges
- Science, technology, manufacturing and advanced engineering
- Agriculture and food production
- Arts and culture
- Renewable energy and environmental sustainability
- Healthcare

- 
- Tourism
 - Humanitarian assistance

The agreement encourages knowledge sharing, business and educational exchanges, and joint projects that foster innovation, resilience and sustainable growth. It also commits both regions to regular dialogue, visits and ongoing collaboration to ensure the partnership continues to evolve and respond to emerging needs.

Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“This Memorandum of Understanding marks a new chapter in the relationship between Suffolk and Poltava. It is a clear and heartfelt commitment to work together, to learn from one another, and to build a partnership that reflects our shared values and aspirations.

“This agreement contains practical steps that will help both our regions grow stronger. But it’s also about building connections between our communities, between our schools and colleges, between our businesses and institutions. It’s about creating opportunities for exchange, for learning and for mutual support.

“It provides a foundation on which we will build real, lasting connections, and we look forward to working closely with our Ukrainian friends in the months and years ahead.”

Volodymyr Kohut, Head of the Poltava Administration, said:

“The signing of this document is extremely important for us. Despite the challenges of war, we are looking into the future and, after the peace comes, we will have to rebuild our country.

“This will affect many areas – from agriculture to renewable energy. And your experience in their development is invaluable. Great Britain is our reliable partner. We are grateful to the UK Government and its citizens for their support and willingness to help both now and when the war is over.”

The MoU will remain in effect for five years, with both parties committed to reviewing progress and exploring new areas of cooperation as the relationship develops.

Several other local authorities have made or are making similar agreements with other regions of Ukraine.

New book reveals more about Ipswich’s significant Anglo-Saxon past

Gipeswic: The Anglo-Saxon Town of Ipswich captures a lifetime of work and excavations by author, Keith Wade, a local archaeologist since 1974.



Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service has published the book, who Keith worked for until his retirement in 2012.

The book supports his long-held assertion that Ipswich is the country's oldest town with continuous occupation on the same site. Ipswich dates back to the 7th century, and is one of the three earliest English towns (the others being Southampton and London).

“This is a stunning publication and a unique look into Ipswich’s history. Keith’s passion for his work shines through, and I would be surprised if there is anyone more informed about the town’s past.”

Councillor Debbie Richards, Suffolk County Council’s deputy cabinet member for Archaeology and Landscape Partnerships

Keith’s favourite site to excavate was prior to the building of the Buttermarket Shopping Centre where a 7th century cemetery was discovered, overlaid by streets and buildings of the 8th to 11th centuries. The site then became the medieval Carmelite Friary.

Another highlight was the excavation east of Foundation Street, discovering the first town bank and ditch built by the Vikings. Also uncovered here was the medieval Dominican Friary, the remains of which were then consolidated for public view rather than being built over.

Keith Wade, the book’s author, said:

“For me, Ipswich has been an outstanding archaeological project. I have many fond memories of the sites and the many diggers, without whom none of it would have been possible.

“I was privileged to be in the right place at the right time to excavate in Ipswich for over 40 years. This was a period of considerable redevelopment which would have destroyed all the archaeological evidence if we had not excavated beforehand.

“My hope is that this book will make the early importance of Ipswich more widely known and for it to help inform future local exhibitions and displays.

“I’d love to see it provide a source of interest for many years to come - not just for its residents but for the wider academic community interested in the origin of our English towns.”

The book describes how Ipswich (Gipeswic) was operating as a landing place for continental visitors by sea in the 7th century and as a permanent town from the early 8th century.

Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period its primary function was as a port, importing wine and mill stones from northern France, Belgium and the Rhineland, but it was also a major craft production centre, dominated by pottery production.



It was also important during the Viking settlement of eastern England in the late 9th century. The Danish occupation was associated with an economic boom and the town was first surrounded with a bank and ditch.

Soon after the Norman Conquest, in 1066, the town was ravaged by the Conqueror, and many burnt-down houses have been excavated of late 11th century date. In some, the charred remains of their contents survived, including some bread rolls. However, the town soon recovered and a castle was built in the 12th century, which was demolished decades later.

Councillor Debbie Richards, Suffolk County Council's deputy cabinet member for Archaeology and Landscape Partnerships, said:

"This is a stunning publication and a unique look into Ipswich's history. Keith's passion for his work shines through, and I would be surprised if there is anyone more informed about the town's past.

"I thank Keith for his commitment to the county council's archaeological service through the decades. I'm delighted that his knowledge will live on in this book, and be a part of Ipswich's future for the benefit of researchers and historians."

The monograph is volume 184 in the journal East Anglian Archaeology. It is priced at £35 and is available from [Script Books](#). It will also be available through Suffolk Community Libraries.

Ofsted Focused Visit finds 'early signs of improvement' in Front Door Children's Services

The report, which noted 'early signs of improvement beginning to emerge' found:

- Children identified as at risk of harm receive prompt and appropriate responses with strong oversight and swift multi-agency collaboration
- Clear investment and support from the whole council for children's services
- High staff morale, stable workforce, strong peer and managerial support maintaining consistency for families despite leadership changes

The report also highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- Monitoring systems need to more reliably flag delays and support effective management decision-making
- More consistency in professional curiosity and threshold decisions needed
- Better recognition and response needed to patterns of concern when multiple or repeated requests are made for the same families



Since the ILACS report in August 2024, which found that the authority's children's services 'Require Improvement to be Good', Suffolk County Council's children's services have been on a transformation journey.

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services said:

"We welcome the report and opportunity to receive this focused visit from Ofsted. I am pleased to say that Ofsted's findings were very much as we expected. The focused visit has demonstrated that we know our service well; we know our strengths and where we are making good progress, but we also know where we need to improve.

"As with any significant transformation, we know this will take time. We are where we would expect to be at this stage of our journey, and I am confident that we are moving in the right direction."

The letter notes that leaders have 'Strengthened Oversight' of the service as a whole. This was a key area for development from the ILACS report, which is now considered a strength. The letter continues: 'Leaders have welcomed external reviews on services including the Front Door services and are acting on these findings'.

Work has also begun on an 'Integrated Front Door' for the service, which aims to provide a single, central point of contact for all children's social care and early help services.

Information about children coming into the Local Authority will be centralised to enable swift, safe and consistent decision making. These changes will enable the service to consider children's holistic needs in order to make decisions about who and how is best to provide support to them and their families.

Cllr Bennett continues: "We are using tried and tested methods and processes which we have seen working well in other parts of the country. The Integrated front door will not only make getting in touch easier for children, young people and their families, but it will speed up decision making and give us a fuller picture of the family, which will improve experiences and outcomes."

Practice Managers from Targeted Early Help services (Family Support) have recently joined the service's Integrated Front Door, Ofsted noted that 'The recent involvement of Family Support Practice Managers in Front Door services is a strength. Their oversight promotes consistent threshold decisions and enables prompt transition to and from Early Help.'

[Read the letter from Ofsted's focused visit](#)



1,000-year-old Sizewell silver coin hoard staying in its Suffolk home

Oxford Cotswold Archaeology carried out excavation works near the site of the future nuclear power station and discovered the lead and cloth package containing the mint condition coins.

The donation to SCCAS from Sizewell C, means that the find will be curated for posterity in its home county and will be made available to researchers of all levels.

Local and national museums can also apply for a short-term loan, so that as many people as possible can see it in the future.

“We are thrilled that Sizewell C is kindly donating this hoard, along with the rest of the excavated archive from the site, to the county council’s archaeological archive.”
Councillor Debbie Richards, Suffolk County Council’s deputy cabinet member for Archaeology and Landscape Partnerships

The hoard features coins minted between 1036 and 1044 during the reigns of Harold I, Edward the Confessor, and the lesser known Harthacnut. Though a large proportion of the coins were minted in London, many coins were struck at other locations, including Thetford, Norwich, Ipswich, Lincoln and Stamford.

Affectionately known as ‘the pasty’ - for its visual likeness to a Cornish pasty - it is speculated that it was the savings pot of a local figure, who buried it as a precaution in the face of the social and political upheaval of the 11th century.

Councillor Debbie Richards, Suffolk County Council’s deputy cabinet member for Archaeology and Landscape Partnerships, said:

“We are thrilled that Sizewell C is kindly donating this hoard, along with the rest of the excavated archive from the site, to the county council’s archaeological archive.

“Our officers monitor all archaeological projects in the county to ensure excavation is carried out to a high standard. Our Finds recording team also administers all Treasure finds from the county, including this exquisite silver coin hoard.”

Damian Leydon, Site Delivery Director at Sizewell C, said:

“It is important for us that the Sizewell C project respects the history that lies underneath the site. And it is equally important that we find a way to keep the treasures and discoveries in their Suffolk home for people to see.

“By working with Suffolk County Council’s Archaeological Service, and donating these finds to them, this is the best possible way to ensure their conservation and make them accessible to researchers and the public.”



The silver coin hoard is currently undergoing further conservation and research by specialists.

You can learn more about the archaeology discovered during Sizewell C construction at a [free open day](#) on Saturday 25 October 2025 at the Riverside Centre in Stratford St Andrew, which will highlight finds from the Two Village Bypass.

There is also a series of webinars being delivered by Oxford Cotswold Archaeology over the autumn and winter, to present findings from the ongoing excavations.

Details on all these events can be found at www.sizewellc.com
Read more about [the original discovery of the hoard](#).

Suffolk residents safer than ever thanks to 70% increase in home fire safety visits

This increase in tailored fire safety advice and support comes as Candle Fire Safety Week (20–26 October) coincides with Diwali, the Festival of Lights (20 October), celebrated by Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities, when homes are illuminated with candles and oil lamps (diyas).

The timing serves as a timely reminder of the importance of fire safety, particularly when using open flames in the home.

Preventing fires, protecting lives

Despite being one of the smallest fire prevention teams in the country, the SFRS Prevention Team, led by Group Manager Lee Wilkins, has transformed home fire safety delivery across Suffolk.

The growth in HFSVs reflects improvements in working practices, stronger community engagement, staff training, and targeted support for vulnerable residents, ensuring help reaches those most at risk.

“Our focus is always on protecting residents where the risk of harm from fire is greatest – in their homes,” said Lee Wilkins, Head of Prevention. “Every visit and educational session increases the likelihood that domestic fires can be prevented.

He continued: “With nearly 850 accidental fires each year across England started by candles, this week is a perfect opportunity to remind everyone to take simple precautions. Keep candles and oil lamps (diyas) away from flammable materials such as curtains, decorations and soft furnishings, place them on stable surfaces out of reach of children and pets, never leave them unattended, ensure they are properly extinguished, and make sure smoke alarms are installed and working.”

Children and young people at heightened risk



Children and young people are particularly vulnerable in domestic fires. According to the Home Office, over 350 children under the age of 11 are injured and seven are killed in accidental fires in the home each year. ¹

Many of these incidents result from the accidental misuse of equipment or open flames, highlighting the need for targeted education and preventative measures.

To address this, the Prevention Team delivers the SPARK programme, designed by the Service's Youth Education and Development Manager, Claire Watkins. The programme provides fire safety advice tailored to each Key Stage, ensuring it is both age-appropriate and engaging.

Schools are selected based on local fire and safety incident data and the needs of communities facing higher levels of risk, ensuring that safety messages reach children and young people aged 4–19 who need them most.

Since its launch in September 2024, SPARK has already been delivered to over 5,700 children and young people in the 2024–25 academic year alone - an **850%** increase compared with previous years.

Protecting the county's most vulnerable residents

For Suffolk residents, individuals who qualify for a Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) are visited by a specialist practitioner or operational firefighters who will help create a tailored home fire safety plan. Those deemed most at risk also receive free smoke alarms or specialist equipment.

This includes the elderly, individuals with hearing or sight impairments, those with limited mobility, and people living with dementia, who may have a reduced ability to respond quickly to fire hazards.

A study published in the *Journal of Fire Sciences* found that fire injury risk increases with age, being more common in older individuals. ² This is supported by data from the Home Office, published in 2024, which reported that in the year ending March 2024, 37% of all fire-related fatalities in England occurred among people aged 65 years and over, with a fatality rate of 10.9 per million for those aged 80 and over compared with 4.2 per million for the general population. ³

Factors contributing to this elevated risk include physical frailty, cognitive impairments, and the use of medications affecting alertness and mobility. ⁴

To help identify the most vulnerable in the community, the team has integrated with Safelincs, an online platform that allows residents or their carers to complete a virtual home fire safety check.

Based on the data entered, the platform alerts the Prevention Team to those considered most vulnerable and at higher risk. This approach ensures fire safety support reaches as



many people as possible while prioritising additional resources for those who need it most. People deemed as low risk will still receive a bespoke Home Fire Action Plan.

Recognition and award success

The team's achievements were recognised earlier this month with a Cabinet Member Award for Team Achievement, which was presented to them at this year's Service Awards by **Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Safety, Councillor Steve Wiles**, who said:

"The Prevention Team's work exemplifies the highest standards of dedication and professionalism. Their tireless efforts have a real, measurable impact on community safety, keeping residents across Suffolk safer in their homes.

"The team's achievements demonstrate the difference that focused, proactive prevention work can make, and they set a benchmark for home fire safety for services across the country."

For more information about home fire safety or to check your eligibility for Home Fire Safety Visit, visit [Check if you're eligible for a home fire safety visit - Suffolk County Council](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/home-fire-safety-visit), call 01473 260588 or email fire.businesssupport@suffolk.gov.uk.

References:

1. Home Office. (2022). *Fire safety for parents and child carers (accessible version)*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-for-parents-and-child-carers/fire-safety-for-parents-and-child-carers-accessible-version>
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4. Jones, L., et al. (2022). *Older adults and fire risk: contributing factors*. NFPA Journal.

Mapping project reaches major digital milestone

Suffolk County Council has reached a major digital milestone in putting the county on the map.

It has completed the Definitive Map and Statement (DM&S) consolidation project, using modern background mapping to prepare the updated legal record of public rights of way (PROW) such as footpaths, bridleways, and byways in Suffolk.

The consolidation project is the process of preparing a new digital DM&S that incorporates all legal changes since the previous issue.



Moving away from hand-drawn maps and written notes, the council has created new versions of the maps from a digital database using specialist software against Ordnance Survey Mastermap base mapping.

It has involved checking and digitising more than 10,500 individual routes across the county, ensuring they reflect the effects of more than 2,600 legal orders, including complex public path order packages.

This ensures that Suffolk's PROW network — which extends across thousands of miles of countryside — is properly recorded and accessible for generations to come.

The updated Definitive Maps are clearer and easier to interpret and working from a digital database makes it easier to share data with a wide range of partners, including user groups, councils, developers, the National Trust, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission. Working copies of the maps are available for the public to view and download from the [Rights of Way and Access pages](#) of the Suffolk County Council website.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Operational Highways, said: “The conclusion of this project marks the end of many years of dedicated and meticulous work for the team and I congratulate them on their hard work.”

The second phase of the project will now commence, establishing a rolling programme of consolidation to incorporate future legal changes and addressing mismatches between the Definitive Map parish boundaries and current administrative boundaries.

Suffolk's first DM&S was produced in the 1950s and was divided into 19 former rural and urban districts. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 now places a statutory duty on councils to continually review the legal record of rights of way.

The first consolidated map was completed for Ipswich in 2009.

Since then, progress has continued steadily, with the sealed legal copies now held at Suffolk's Records Office, *The Hold*.

The working copies are available to view in hard copy by prior appointment at Phoenix House in Ipswich, which houses the highways department for SCC, and on [the county council's website](#).

Remembering Councillor Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro

Councillor Jessica Fleming, Chairman of Suffolk County Council, said:

"It is with deep sorrow that I share the news of the passing of our much-loved colleague and friend, Councillor Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro.



"Melanie was first elected to represent the Pakefield Division at Suffolk County Council in May 2017 and was re-elected in 2021.

"From June 2021 to May 2024, Melanie brought her enthusiasm and insight to the role of Deputy Cabinet Member for Protected Landscapes and Archaeology. She had a real appreciation for Suffolk's heritage and natural beauty, and she approached her responsibilities with care, thoughtfulness, and quiet determination.

"Over the years, she made a significant and lasting contribution to the Council's work, but far more than that her commitment to the Broads Authority and the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority was appreciated by all.

"Those who knew Melanie will remember her not only for her service, but for her warmth, kindness, and sense of fun. She had a rare ability to connect with all people, and her spirit and genuine decency transcended politics. She was, quite simply, lovely to work with and to know.

"Her loss will be deeply felt across the Council and by all who had the privilege of calling her a friend.

"On behalf of the Council, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to Melanie's family, friends, and all who were close to her at this very difficult time.

"We will remember Melanie with immense gratitude for her dedication to Suffolk and with affection for the warmth and humanity."

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

"Melanie was a truly valued and much-loved member of Suffolk County Council, who cared deeply about Pakefield and Lowestoft and coastal communities.

"As the local councillor for Pakefield since 2017, Melanie brought energy, optimism, and compassion to everything she did.

"She was passionate about her work and always had time for others - whether supporting residents, contributing to committees, or championing Suffolk's heritage and natural environment as Deputy Cabinet Member for Protected Landscapes and Archaeology.

"Melanie had a warmth and kindness that made a lasting impression on everyone she met. Her positivity and generosity of spirit reached across political boundaries, and she was respected and admired by colleagues from all sides of the Council.

"Her passing is a tremendous loss to Suffolk County Council and to the many people who had the privilege of knowing her. My thoughts, and those of my group are with Melanie's family and friends at this very sad time."



Suffolk celebrates five years of investment in the National Cycle Network

Suffolk County Council is proud to mark five years of dedicated investment in the National Cycle Network – a key part of the county’s infrastructure supporting safer, greener, and more accessible travel for all.

In that time Suffolk County Council has secured more than £5 million to enhance the network across the county.

This work has been delivered in partnership with Walk Wheel and Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans), the national charity responsible for maintaining and developing the Network. Together, they have delivered improvements in signage, route safety, and connectivity - helping thousands of residents and visitors walk, wheel, and cycle more confidently and more often.

Key areas of improvement include routes from Ipswich Hospital to the Waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and areas within Woodbridge as part of the town’s active travel project.

The Network plays a crucial role in connecting Suffolk’s towns, villages, and countryside — linking historic market towns, scenic coastal paths, and rural communities. It not only offers a low-carbon transport alternative but also encourages healthier, more active lifestyles.

Looking to the future, Suffolk County Council is excited to announce proposals for two pilot Quietways - low-traffic rural routes designed to form part of the Network and provide an even more comfortable and attractive experience for people choosing active travel. These Quietways, funded by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, via Active Travel England are currently being explored between Carlton Colville and Barnby, and Onehouse to Woolpit.

Councillor Alexander Nicoll, Suffolk County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, said: “We are committed to delivering a high-quality active travel network that works for every community in Suffolk.

“These schemes align with national standards and support our long-term ambitions under the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

“Whether you're commuting, exercising, or simply enjoying the outdoors, we want active travel to be the easy and natural choice for everyone in Suffolk.”

Matt Barber, Head of Growth and Partnerships at Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, said: “We are extremely grateful for the support shown by Suffolk County Council, and we are delighted that this commitment to improving the National Cycle Network is continuing.

“We know that across Suffolk thousands of people enjoy using the Network each year, helping to improve their health, whilst cutting congestion and carbon emissions.



“However, we also know that for many the lack of safe, accessible infrastructure is the reason they cannot regularly walk, wheel, or cycle – this is why we are delighted to be piloting two Quietway projects in Suffolk; allowing us to test out low-cost interventions as we attempt to connect up more of our villages and communities.”