

March 2026

Suffolk County Council Parish Report

Cllr Annette Dunning, Halesworth

Tel: 07955 434408 or email annette.dunning@suffolk.gov.uk

Local elections in May 2026 reinstated

At the end of January, the government announced that a number of local elections around the country would be postponed, where councils had written to them saying it would be helpful for delivery of Local Government Reorganization (LGR). This included Suffolk County Council's elections, which were due to be held on Thursday 7 May 2026. However, following legal challenge, the government has reversed its plans and has now announced that county council elections – as well as those due to be held by Ipswich Borough Council – will take place as originally planned. New councillors elected in May will hold office until the new unitary authority/ies are vested in 2028, with councillors for the new unitary authority/ies elected in 2027 and 'shadowing' the existing councillors for a year.

The government is due to make an announcement by the end of March on how many unitary councils will be set up in Suffolk. However, I feel it is important to say at this time that it has been brought to our attention, after an FOI request from the BBC, that both the SCC leader Matthew Hicks and the SCC Chief Exec Nicola Beach wrote in secret to the government trying to prevent the proposal for three new councils in Suffolk going to public consultation. [Secret letters on Suffolk councils consultation 'disappointing' - BBC News](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1jkzgz48o) (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1jkzgz48o>)

Energy, Water, Transport, Commercial and Adaptive Infrastructure Policy

At Cabinet on Tuesday 24 February, revisions to the council's Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy were approved, including a change in the name of the policy to the Energy, Water, Transport, Commercial and Adaptive Infrastructure Policy. This policy details how the council will respond to large developments such as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), solar farms and data centres that may be attached to them, and changes to road systems in the county that may be needed following the projects. Suffolk County Council is a consultee on NSIP proposals, but it is not the decision-maker, and the policy sets out how the council will respond to such consultations, such as protecting best and most versatile agricultural land for food production, wellbeing of local communities where projects are disruptive and especially where there is cumulative impact of multiple projects, such as the coastal area around Sizewell C. The policy notes that solar farms may soon have data centres attached, so the council needs to have an agreed approach for developments that are large scale and energy-intensive. The policy also sets out that Suffolk County Council expects developers proposing projects to fund Planning Performance Agreements – this means that responding to all the proposals for these developments does not come out of the council's budget.

Vehicle Removal Trial for Resurfacing Works

Suffolk Highways have announced that they will trial removing vehicles that have not been removed for planned resurfacing works. The council plans to make sure that residents are made aware at least two weeks in advance of any works, with cards placed under windscreens and put through residents' doors. Two days before the works are due to begin, cones will be put out along with signage to say when the works are due to begin. If there are still cars parked on the road on the day works are due to start, officers will knock on doors to try and find the owner to move it, but as a last resort, vehicles will be moved, ideally nearby where they are still in sight, but if this is not possible, they may be moved to a facility in Bury St Edmunds with a £70 fine issued. As with other Penalty Charge Notices, the amount payable is halved if the fine is paid promptly. Although it has long had the power to remove vehicles for planned works, until now Suffolk County Council has not exercised it – compared to Essex County Council, for example, who have been doing this for about a decade. This approach will be adopted by the council for a period between March to June 2026 initially, with a report prepared on the trial and making recommendations for the future.

Changes at the Top

On 13 February, it was announced that Nicola Beach, the Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council, would be leaving her role. Nicola has been Chief Executive since 2018 when she replaced Deborah Cadman and will be stepping down at the end of March 2026. The council proposes to appoint two existing directors – Andrew Cook and Mark Ash – into new joint chief executive roles for the remaining two years of the council's existence. As these directors' existing posts would not be recruited into, the number of senior staff at the council will reduce by one, saving up to £92k a year. This decision must be ratified by councillors at the next meeting of full council on 19 March 2026.

Suffolk Sustainability Initiatives Nominated for Awards

Suffolk County Council has been nominated for a national award for its work on energy and sustainability. Only 24 local authorities in the UK have been shortlisted for the first APSE Energy Awards, which are held in partnership with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

The awards celebrate innovation and the role local authorities play in responding to the challenges of energy transition, climate change and long-term sustainability. The 'Accessing & Managing Finance' category recognises Suffolk County Council's Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme (administered by Lendology CIC), and the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group's Home Energy Efficiency Assessment Scheme (administered by Reed In Partnership). The loan scheme offers an interest-free loan to make energy efficient improvements, such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps. Through countywide Sustainable Suffolk initiatives, the county is also up for a second award, in the 'Working in Collaboration' category which involves a range of projects such as a study into supporting taxi drivers to move to electric vehicles, and launching the Suffolk Sustainable Schools Network.

You can find out more about these initiatives here: <https://sustainablesuffolk.org.uk/>

Social Media and Helpful Links

Follow us on:

Twitter - [Suffolk Green, Lib Dem & Independent Group \(@SuffolkGLI\) / Twitter](#)

Instagram – https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/

Facebook - [Suffolk GLI - Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent Group | Facebook](#)

Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>