

Suffolk County Councillor's Report to Parish Councils – July 2026

Suffolk County Council Updates

Local Government Reorganisation

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) continues to be a significant issue for Suffolk. The County Council is pursuing a Judicial Review of the Government's decision regarding the future structure of local government in Suffolk.

A number of questions have been raised by councillors regarding the decision-making process, the legal basis for the challenge, the anticipated costs, and the arrangements for member scrutiny. Given the significance of the proposals and their long-term impact on local communities, many councillors have emphasised the importance of transparency and keeping residents informed.

Climate Change

The County Council has agreed to withdraw the Climate Emergency declaration originally made in 2019.

While the declaration has changed, existing energy efficiency and carbon reduction projects continue. These initiatives have delivered significant savings in energy costs while reducing emissions from council operations. Members discussed the importance of ensuring that projects continue to provide both environmental and financial benefits for Suffolk residents.

Cabinet Meetings and Scrutiny

Changes were introduced to the way Cabinet meetings are conducted, including limiting councillors to one question per agenda item rather than the previous practice of allowing up to three.

Some members expressed concerns that this could reduce opportunities for detailed scrutiny of decisions. Effective scrutiny remains an important part of local government and helps ensure decisions are properly examined on behalf of residents.

A140 Earl Stonham Improvement Scheme

Cabinet considered proposals to progress the A140 Major Road Network scheme at Earl Stonham.

While there is broad recognition that improvements are needed at the junction, questions were raised regarding the proposed design, impacts on local communities, long-term effectiveness, and support for affected residents. Further work on the scheme will continue.

Post-16 Transport Policy

The Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for the 2026/27 academic year was considered by Cabinet.

During discussion, members raised issues including:

- Public participation in the consultation process.
- Transport options available to young people living in rural communities.
- Whether charging arrangements could be reviewed.

- Support available for students with changing family circumstances.
- Outcomes from independent travel training.

As your local County Councillor, I highlighted the challenges faced by students in rural areas where public transport options are often limited and sought reassurance that suitable transport arrangements remain available.

EcoPower Suffolk Solar Farm Consultation

Consultation has begun on the proposed EcoPower Suffolk solar farm and battery storage scheme in Mid Suffolk.

The proposal has generated considerable interest across local communities. Issues raised include the impact on agricultural land, landscape, highways, biodiversity, heritage assets, battery storage, water resources and local infrastructure.

Residents, businesses and parish councils are encouraged to review the consultation documents carefully and submit their views before the consultation closes.

RAF Barnham

Following the Government's announcement regarding the proposed use of RAF Barnham to accommodate asylum seekers, councillors have sought further information about the proposals and their potential impact on local communities.

Many questions remain regarding infrastructure, transport, public services and local consultation. Members continue to request clear information so residents can fully understand the proposals.

Highways

Bridleway Improvement – Bury St Edmunds to Horringer

Work has started on resurfacing the bridleway between Horringer and Bury St Edmunds.

The scheme will provide a safer off-road walking and cycling route linking the village with Bury St Edmunds and Ickworth Estate. It has been developed in partnership with local communities, the National Trust and Horringer-cum-Ickworth Parish Council, with completion expected later this summer.

Surface Dressing Programme

Suffolk Highways has begun its annual surface dressing programme across the county.

Approximately 759,000 square metres of road will be treated during the programme. Surface dressing helps extend the life of roads, improves skid resistance and reduces the need for more extensive repairs in future.

Residents are encouraged to observe temporary speed restrictions and follow signage where works are taking place.

Adult Social Care

The Care Quality Commission has again rated Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as **"Good."**

The inspection recognised the commitment of staff and partner organisations in supporting residents, while also identifying areas for continued improvement, including waiting times and support for unpaid carers.

I would like to thank all staff, providers and partners for their continued dedication in delivering these vital services.

Minerals and Waste Plan

Work has begun on preparing a new Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan.

The first stage is a countywide “Call for Sites”, inviting landowners and operators to suggest potential sites for future mineral extraction and waste management. This is an early stage of the planning process, with further consultation taking place before any decisions are made.

Apprenticeships

Suffolk County Council has expanded its Apprenticeship Levy Support Scheme in partnership with Apprenticeships Norfolk.

The initiative enables larger employers to transfer unused apprenticeship levy funding to smaller businesses, helping more employers recruit apprentices and invest in workforce development across Suffolk.