

County Councillor Report



Report for Parish Councils, April 2026

Councillor Jessica Fleming, Hartismere Division. Tel. 07714-597980 Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk

Devolution - On 25th March the Government confirmed that it has accepted a proposal for three unitary authorities in Suffolk to replace the current two-tier system. The full Written Ministerial Statement is here: [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#). This approach was not advocated by Suffolk County Council. The County Council has concerns over three sub-tier councils due to (1) higher anticipated costs for local tax payers; (2) service differentials inconsistency especially in the areas of social care, education, highways and flood management; (3) councils would fragment (and weaken) the County unit rendering it easier for a Mayoral authority to exert regional powers over local service delivery. In addition, clarity is lacking about how civic appointments and activities would be affected. These are carried out based on the County as a unit and include the Lieutenancy, local and national service awards, the citizenship service, and management of visits by Royalty or Foreign Dignatories. Further steps in the Local Government Reorganization process include making a Structural Change Order for agreement this coming summer which would in effect dissolve the County (and other Councils) later in 2026; unitary elections are scheduled for May 2027, and Mayoral elections in 2028 along with new councils.

New 'combined' election boundaries in Suffolk for the three proposed unitary authorities are shown at: [Proposed unitary authorities 2026: Maps - House of Commons Library](#)

- Western Suffolk Council (current local government areas of West Suffolk, 21 parishes from Mid Suffolk, and Babergh (less 31 parishes)). Population: 269,000.
- Central and Eastern Suffolk Council (current local government areas of Mid Suffolk (less 29 parishes), and East Suffolk (less 25 parishes)). Population: 261,000.
- Ipswich and South Suffolk Council (current local government areas of Ipswich, 31 parishes from Babergh, 8 from Mid Suffolk, and 25 from East Suffolk). Population: 257,000.

In Norfolk, three unitary authorities are also proposed:

- West Norfolk Council (current local government areas of Breckland, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, and 9 parishes from South Norfolk). Population: 310,000.
- Greater Norwich Council (current local government areas of Norwich, 19 parishes from Broadland, and 16 parishes from South Norfolk). Population: 290,000.
- East Norfolk Council (current local government areas of Broadland (less 19 parishes), Great Yarmouth, North Norfolk, and South Norfolk (less 25 parishes)). Population: 341,000.

Highways / Traffic – Following the school site visit in March, SCC Highways suggested new signage at the entrance to Broadfields Close. My LHB will pay for the School signs, estimated at £1,293. Other steps are also recommended with involvement from the Junior Road Safety Officer team.

“Simpler / Better” Recycling – Commencing in June 2026 government mandated changes come into effect regarding collection and disposal of household and business wastes. Currently District and Borough councils collect waste (black bins), co-mingled/ mixed recyclable materials (except glass), and garden waste. The County Council is the disposal authority and manages the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Blakenham where most dry recyclables are separated and repurposed. Black bin contents go to the Energy from Waste Facility (EFW), some rubble goes to Masons Landfill in Blakenham. In practice, District and County councils act cooperatively through the Suffolk Waste Partnership to manage the County’s non-hazardous waste streams.

The changes bring substantial costs such as modifying the MRF to take glass, contracting for a new food waste processing facility in Suffolk (Bio Capital in Southwold is likely), and finding new markets. Local glass collection will continue for a trial period alongside kerbside collection in Mid Suffolk.

Retirement of Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk Lady Clare Countess of Euston - Lady Clare retired on April 15th after 12 years in this role. She is succeeded by Mark Pendlington. The Lord Lieutenant plays a civic and ceremonial role in the County as the representative of the reigning monarch at important events such as citizenship, religious services and the national honours and awards. Lady Clare attended Full Council on the 19th March and gave her Thought for the Day.

NSIP Planning Update - the UK government intends to push energy related schemes through without delay and remove some powers from local authorities, and has established an in-house unit at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to discharge Development Consent Order (DCO) requirements, which is currently the responsibility of local authorities. The government will extend this approach to all electricity network and energy projects, not limited to nuclear. SCC is concerned that this will put communities at risk of being subject to ill-considered projects which do not take into account local factors. Refer to: [Building our nuclear nation: government response to the Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025 \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK](#)

National Grid Pylon Scheme –The Application for a Development Consent Order is undergoing Examination by the Planning Inspectorate which will continue through 10th August. SCC representatives gave evidence on 10 February at Ipswich Town Football Club. Transcripts are available on the PINS website : [Norwich to Tilbury - Project information](#). The week commencing 27th April is reserved for further Hearings and Site Inspections, if scheduled. Contact the project team if you wish to participate or comment further, or to request a site meeting: email NorwichToTilbury@planninginspectorate.gov.uk with your request.

The County Council’s position is to oppose the overground option with preference for off shore or undergrounding, along with scrapping the 2030 target for delivery which has been put forward as the main reason for NG’s preference for overgrounding.

Eco-Power Solar - The Scoping Report is now completed, and the main DCO application is scheduled for later in 2026. The scoping decision excluded several subject areas of concern such as socio-economics, cultural heritage and ground conditions which is of great concern to the Council.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk
Tel: 07714-597980 Twitter: @jesstfleming