

County Councillor Report



Parish Councils, March 2026

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County Elections and Local Government Reorganisation – The Government has abandoned plans to delay 30 local council elections in England after receiving legal advice that the move could be unlawful. Local Government Secretary Steve Reed had previously approved postponing the ballots until 2027, citing concerns about capacity during a major reorganisation of local government. Local County elections will now take place on 7th May. Other proposals and dates include:
Mid. March – Government will announce unitary government areas in Norfolk and Suffolk
Structural Change Order Issued covering dissolution of the County Council – July '26
Unitary Boundaries determined with new unitary councillor elections – May 2027
New authority comes into force with Mayoral Elections - May 2028.

Retirement of Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk Lady Clare Countess of Euston - Lady Clare retires on April 15th after 12 years in this role. She will be succeeded by Mark Pendlington. The Lord Lieutenant plays a civic or ceremonial role in the County as the representative of the reigning monarch at important events such as citizenship, church services and the granting of national honours and awards. Lady Clare will be attending Full Council on the 19th March to give her Thought for the Day on what is likely to be the last Full Council meeting before local elections in May.

Chief Executive Nicola Beach to Retire in April – Nicola has served as Chief Executive for 8 years and will be greatly missed. Plans are to replace her with two current staff members who will serve as Joint Chief Executives rather than hiring a new individual given the likely short term of the County Council (ending in 2028). Officers Andrew Cook and Mark Ash are recommended for this joint role and will be appointed at the March 19th Council meeting.

Please find a link to the agenda and papers for the Council on Thursday 19 March in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, Ipswich, IP1 2BX. [County Council - 19 March 2026](#)

Recycling Changes – Central Government mandated changes to recycling in Suffolk and throughout England are coming in at the end of March, most households will have received notices. Collection of recycling and waste at the kerbside remains the responsibility of borough and district councils, with the County Council responsible for taking control at waste transfer stations and materials recycling centres such as the MRF at Blakenham, which has needed to be refitted.

Infrastructure Investment: The county council has allocated £4.535 million for upgrades to waste transfer stations to facilitate the new collection methods. There will also be new arrangements for disposal as previously Suffolk did not have separate food waste or glass collection arrangements.

New Collection Bins: From spring 2026, new bins will be distributed to households, including a dedicated food waste bin and a new paper and card recycling bin. For more information please refer to [Website Simpler Recycling banner](#)

For recycling centres and DIY refer to: [What you can bring and charges - Suffolk Recycling](#)

Items on Highways Verge – it has been noted that sometimes residents place obstructions alongside public highways to discourage vehicles running over the verge. This can be a severe danger to road users, also any private party placing an obstruction on Highways land without express permission would be liable in the case of an incident. Highways generally owns land within 1 meter of the edge of the road. SCC policy is as follows but may be subject to risk assessment: *We advise at least 500mm back from the edge of the road, to allow pedestrians a safe refuge to step off the highway as well as vehicles to pass and repass unobstructed.*

National Grid Norwich to Tilbury Examination – Open Floor Hearings have taken place to include comments and compulsory purchase across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. SCC representatives gave evidence on Tuesday 10 February at Ipswich Town Football Club. Transcripts are available on the Planning Inspectorate’s website : [Norwich to Tilbury - Project information](#)

Week commencing 27th April is reserved for further Hearings and Site Inspection, if scheduled.

Contact the project team which will ask the Examining Authority if you wish to participate or comment further: email NorwichToTilbury@planninginspectorate.gov.uk with your request.

EcoPower Solar – The approx. 600-ha proposal includes installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and co-located ‘Battery Energy Storage System’ (BESS) with an anticipated generating capacity of over 100 megawatts (MW), and grid connection infrastructure. The Proposed Developments are mainly on agricultural land in the parishes of Yaxley, Brome, Eye, Gislingham, Mellis and Occold. The Proposal is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Refer to: [Planning Inspectorate \(PINS\)](#) and [Applicant's \(Econergy\)](#) websites. The Planning Inspector has stated its intention to approve the scoping report submitted by the applicant which sets out key environmental issues to be covered in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Suffolk County Council’s scoping response is at: [EcoPower Suffolk - Suffolk County Council](#)

Budget Setting for ‘26/’27 - The Council’s budget is around £850,000,000. To support its obligations the council is proposing a 4.99% rise in Council Tax (2.99% general and 2% for adult care.) Alongside a forecast 1% rise in the taxbase, this would generate an additional £27.4 million.

The final budget was approved at Full Council on Thursday 12th February.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments:

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