County Councillor Report

Report for Parish Councils, Nov 2026

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1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Following the Government's withdrawal of the previous Local Government Reorganisation proposals, there is currently no active reorganisation programme underway in Suffolk.
The Government is currently reviewing the position regarding local government structures in Suffolk and has indicated that further decisions and guidance are expected by March 2027.
Should a future reorganisation programme proceed, Suffolk's councils would be invited to develop proposals for future local government arrangements. Indicative timelines discussed by councils suggest that shadow elections could take place during 2028, with any new authorities becoming operational in 2029. These dates are not confirmed and remain subject to future Government decisions.
At present there is no change to local services, parish councils, town councils or existing local government arrangements. I will continue to monitor developments and provide updates as further information becomes available.

2. Devolution Update

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) are separate Government programmes and should not be confused. Devolution relates to the transfer of powers, funding and strategic responsibilities from central Government to a regional authority, while LGR concerns the structure and number of local councils.
An agreement has now been reached between Suffolk and Norfolk in support of progressing a Mayoral Strategic Authority across both counties. The proposed authority would bring together responsibilities for areas such as transport, infrastructure, housing, skills, economic development, policing and fire governance, helping to secure greater local decision-making and investment for the region.
The agreement includes several safeguards to ensure balanced representation between Suffolk and Norfolk, fair distribution of investment, independent scrutiny, protection of local Fire and Rescue Services, and recognition of the importance of agriculture and fisheries to the regional economy.
Discussions are continuing regarding the future operating model of the authority, including the location of its offices. Current proposals seek to ensure that the authority has a meaningful presence across the wider region rather than being solely based in Norwich or Ipswich.
Potential benefits of devolution include better coordination of transport investment, stronger alignment between skills provision and local employer needs, improved planning of housing alongside supporting infrastructure, and a stronger collective voice when engaging with Government.
At present, there is no direct impact on local services, parish councils or town councils. I will continue to monitor developments and provide updates as further information becomes available.

3. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)

Sea Link Decision and Implications for Hartismere

The Government has granted development consent for National Grid's Sea Link project despite objections from Suffolk County Council, local authorities and affected communities. The Council's concerns focused on construction impacts, environmental effects and the cumulative burden of major energy infrastructure projects within Suffolk.

For communities across the Hartismere Division, the decision underlines the importance of engaging with current and future Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) consultations. Suffolk County Council has confirmed that it will continue to scrutinise developers, seek appropriate mitigation measures and advocate for a more coordinated approach to infrastructure planning across Suffolk.

EcoPower Suffolk Solar Project

The EcoPower Suffolk Solar project team has advised Community Liaison Group members that it is continuing to review feedback received during the summer consultation and is considering how this will influence the next stage of the scheme's development.

The next Community Liaison Group meeting is expected to take place during November, with invitations due to be issued shortly. The meeting will focus on proposed design amendments arising from consultation feedback and ongoing environmental and technical surveys, and project representatives will be available to answer questions from members.

SNORE (Suffolk & Norfolk Oppose Renewable Eyesores)

Residents may wish to be aware of the recently formed SNORE (Suffolk & Norfolk Oppose Renewable Eyesores) group, which brings together community representatives concerned about the cumulative impact of large-scale energy infrastructure projects across Suffolk and Norfolk.

A Suffolk-focused meeting is planned for January 2027, with the aim of helping affected communities, parish councils and residents share information and coordinate engagement with consultation processes.

For communities affected by Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), the group may provide an opportunity to stay informed about emerging proposals, consultation opportunities and campaign activity. Further information can be found on the SNORE website: www.snoregroup.co.uk.

Please note that SNORE is an independent campaign group and is not affiliated with Suffolk County Council.

4. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Update

I am pleased to report that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has taken delivery of 11 new fire engines as part of a £3.6 million investment in frontline emergency response services across the county.

The new appliances form the latest stage of the Service's ongoing fleet replacement programme and have been designed to improve both firefighter safety and operational effectiveness. They incorporate a range of modern features, including touchscreen pump controls, enhanced LED scene lighting, hot hand wash units, tyre pressure monitoring systems, blind spot collision alerts and automated ladder head gantries. The vehicles also include bronze water pumps, which are more resistant to corrosion and are expected to reduce long-term maintenance requirements.

Built by Emergency One on Volvo FL816 chassis, the new 16-tonne Type B pumping appliances are of the same specification as other vehicles already operating successfully within the Suffolk fleet. This consistency helps simplify training, maintenance and operational deployment across the county.

The investment demonstrates Suffolk County Council's commitment to ensuring that firefighters have modern, reliable equipment to support their vital work in protecting communities and responding to emergencies across Suffolk.

Further information is available on the Suffolk County Council website.

5. Suffolk County Council Continues Support for the Armed Forces Covenant
Suffolk County Council has achieved Bronze Award status under the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme and is now working towards Silver Award status.
The award recognises the Council's commitment to supporting members of the Armed Forces community and upholding the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. This includes providing up to two weeks' paid leave for reservists undertaking annual training, supporting employees involved with cadet organisations and ensuring members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged during recruitment and selection processes.
Achieving Silver Award status will further strengthen the Council's support for reservists, veterans and military families, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to those who serve, or have served, in the Armed Forces**.**

6. Christmas Toy Appeal 2026
I would like to encourage residents, community groups and local businesses across the Hartismere Division to support the *Be Kind to a Kid at Christmas* appeal, which collects new toys for Suffolk children whose families may be struggling this Christmas.
Donations can be made between 2 November and 4 December 2026. The nearest collection points for many Hartismere residents are Stowmarket Library and Bury St Edmunds Library. Gifts should be new and unwrapped.
Hartismere communities have a strong tradition of generosity and support for others. If you are able to donate, even a small gift could help make Christmas a little brighter for a local child.
For details, donation criteria and participating libraries, please visit the Suffolk Community Libraries website.

7. Division Contact and Support
If you have specific issues regarding local county services, school transport allocations, or unresolved highways defects, please contact me with your relevant case reference numbers.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: *Paul.Bains@suffolk.gov.uk*
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